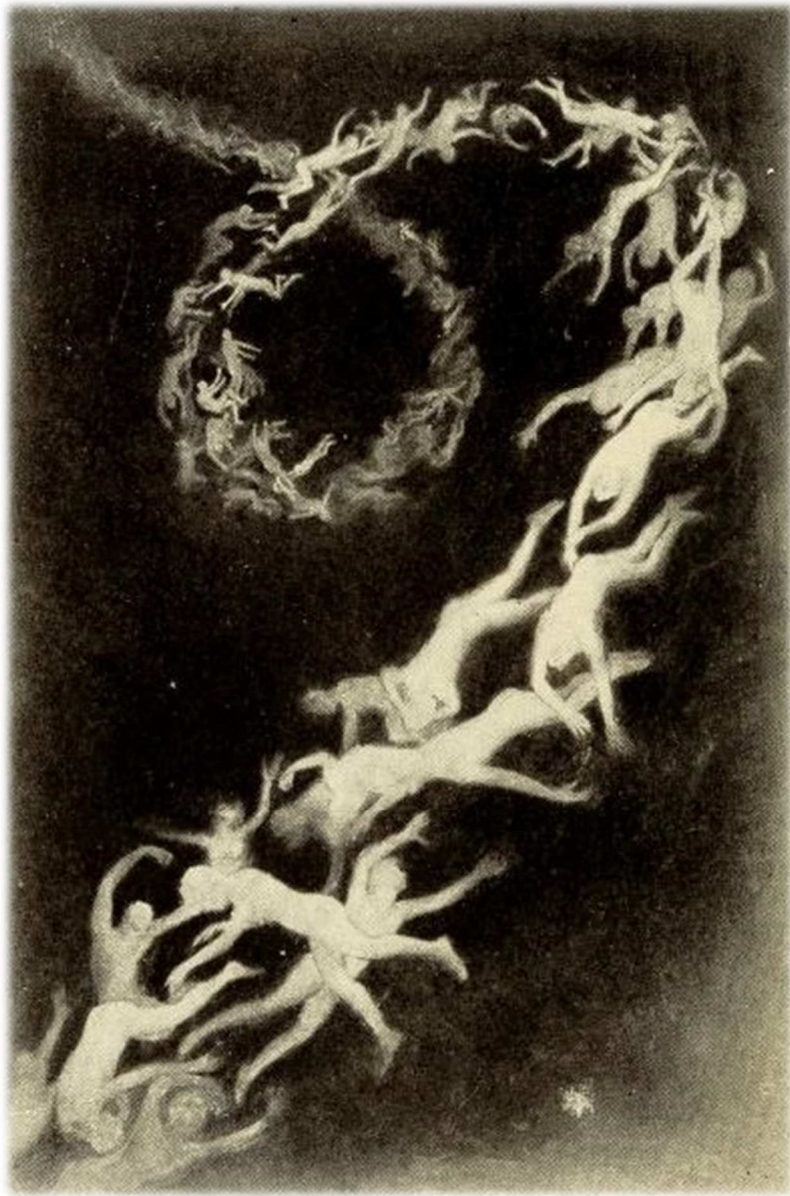


N.N.I.I



a dead spot of light...

Introduction

Where to start?

I have moved, I had to reset my computer configuration and reinstall my operational system; I had to wait for some interviews to be completed ... and some rather tragic family business ... a strange year so far, there is little about that. All this together resulted in a delay of roughly a month and from now on the release schedule will be four months. This gives me more time to deal with the interviews, which seem to take more time than originally expected and anticipated. Maybe this has also to do with my tendency to ask more and more questions.

Leaving these aspects aside, the content of this edition of my magazine has some surprising features. It took me a while to get in touch with them, but in this magazine the Greenland band Arctic Spirit appears with a rare interview and a review on their latest album. Also the rather obscure band Smile Carved Sour shares some thoughts on their rather special interpretation of metal. The interview with Thy Sinister Bloom is basically a continuation of a topic from the preceding magazine. Cory Sloan had been active in Fifth Dominion and Arcane Sun. Aside from these rather prominent bands he is involved in one that should receive more attention and their music is discussed in this edition. Utarm's music is deeply disturbing and a mixture between noise and elements from the black metal scene that artists from the latter genre are rarely able to create on such a level.

Just some examples

Requests of interviews and reviews are generally possible ... I am always open to get in touch with new bands and artists. Also from non-metal genres.

And as I do not want to write this every time in every freaking interview:

I would like to thank every band and label for the promotion material, answers and so on. And thank you for the moral support and nice e-mails ... appreciated!

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All the best ...

oneyoudontknow

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Outlook

The opening interview

UTARM

Why don't you start off by introducing the band a bit? When and by whom had it been started? Who would conduct this interview?

I am inside Utarm, only me.

What does the name Utarm stand for? Is it possible for you to name some kind of source of inspiration?

Utarm is an old Norwegian word, semi-ancient one. Direct translation is depleted, but in Norwegian it would be used to describe barren land, drained resources, starved humans coming in from the cold. It was fitting for what I wanted at the time I started this.

When and why did you start this band? Can you name some kind of music that had played an important role back then?

I started recording music that would become Utarm in 2001-2. As for why, it was simply an urge to make the exact kind of music I would want to hear, experimenting to find the right sounds and riffs to make my head shatter to pieces and reform better than before.

Playing, recording and manipulating some sounds into small pieces I would listen to on repeat endlessly by myself made me want to share it to some people who would maybe have the same manic approach.

There are some very specific and primal influences to Utarm, some not so clearly audible, but they still stays the same; Isengard-Dommedagssalme, Burzum-Once Emperor, Ildjarn-forest poetry, Vond-selv-mord, deathprod-Treetop drive, Venetian Snares-Winter in the belly of a snake, Rotting Christ-Thy Mighty Contract. I will also underline the darkness and disgust for life that oozes from the early releases of Mobb Deep and the Wu Tang. Some of the early nineties rap music from the east coast was truly terrifying and more darker than anything else, and it still is today. Rubber Room!

I also did a lot of graffiti since I was young up until later years, and the sheer lust to do what is called destruction and crime in the public eye may be an influence to the enjoyment of obscure sounds. There are some similar patterns with the graffiti that is displayed and scattered all over the city, yet just nonsense to the public eye, and the obscure sounds of noise and metal that is pure shit to most, obsessions to some.

How do you look back on your early days and how has the perception of your art as well as your approach changed since?

I look back to the early days with pride, the early material is crude and vile, in other words, nothing to be ashamed of. Conceptually I see a linear evolution of course, as I "eat" all that I create, and the outcome is a result of that. More wisdom and technical skills gathered from experience and all sources available. It is vital that the idea is key, not the techniques though. When you become the master of skills with an empty head and still carries desperately on, it is time to find the rope and a chair. My point is, that to do interesting art there has to be something in it for the artist to find also, knowledge and full satisfaction. Good art is searching, not preaching (in most cases).

Why do you perform the music alone? What benefits do you see in this respect? Is there ever a chance to see a collaboration with another artist at some point in the future?

The luxury of working on pure instinct alone is something I hold sacred. When I rarely perform live there will be collaborators who are chosen because of their minds rather over their perfection as musicians. I do not have an aversion against guest performances though, so this has already happened. Kybermensch has sung my words on a song on the next release. I do also play in other bands, so it is not like I portray the nietzschian hermit as a role of life.

As not everyone will know your band, why don't you lay out the basic elements and characteristics of your music? What can someone find in it?

Hopefully they will find another world that would suit them perfectly, that is my aim for myself in this. As for portraying the sound, I think my brother Eirik categorized it nicely as "cave music".

Norway has some prominence for its metal scene and the black metal in particular. How does Utarm fit into this?

I hail Black Metal for giving me the idea of the inverted creation, the beauty of destruction and pain/madness that melts your thoughts by distorting everything that is safe-then giving me the magnificent melodies I have never heard any other place, to make it certain that there is no other place in this world than in the distorted storm of chaos I would want to be!;- there it is; enlightenment and solace! I think my first cathartic experience in this world was listening to Rotting christ when I was twelve. Utarm is not Black Metal nor metal, but Spiritually there is a connection.

Rotting human corpses lie upon each tone of music played, rotting gods on each word.

When it comes to the noise scene, then how would you describe it? Do you reach out to the metal community as well? Are there some noteworthy collaborations between metal and noise in Norway?

For me, Dangerous and unexpected sound is crucial to noise. And so, noise must be almost illegal, banished! And the concert venues of Oslo agrees, because they do not have much noise concerts these days.

It is many different noise scenes in Norway, and I do not know much about it. But that is in itself a sign of vitality, and I most certainly will hope to see some new and unexpected shit happen when I approach some noise event. I think experimentation with sound is good, hell, experimentation in general is good and people should do more of it. That is what noise is to me, from harsh noise walls to complete silence and all in between. As for collaboration between metal/noise, some attempts has been made that seemed more than forced, and some has been natural. I still see Ildjarn as a founding father of primal noise metal. I think Altaar started out more metal/noise combo but got away, in a good way. Great music.

How has the music scene changed over the years?

Well, music is certainly more available now than before. I see that as an improvement. Things change, and the music I worship still evolve. People who want to change the "scene" is mostly nostalgic.

Do you play or create the music for yourself or do you take into account on how the listener might experience it later? Do you want to engage this person in the process of encountering your art?

This is the leading question, right? But of course I want both. I create the music to enhance myself, because as earlier stated, I make the music I really want ringing in my ears, and it should mould my head into twisted shapes. I am obsessed with making these sounds, to say the least. The process is personal, ritualistic and obsessive. Then it is done and documented. And if I think this is the best music in the living world, why would I not share it? Maybe even some listener could put it to use.

I have picked four of your releases and maybe you can write a bit about these. What kind of music do you play on these, how do they differ from each other and what has changed in respect to your conception between these?

Goatheaded Rapist (Demo 2004)

Hate and paranoia music. Dreams of being a depraved and psychotic Satanist who kills at first sight. I got in a lot of fights those days, was not pleased with things. Crude approach at recording also, one mic to amplifier into my first recorder. Still a good record to me.

Mutilation Epoch (Full-length 2007)

Recording of this album was freezing cold, as I lived in a flat with minus degrees inside during the winter. I experimented a lot with some stimulants at the time, so I do not remember much really, except I wanted it to be haunting and distant, rusted mechanical ghosts speaking through me. I think I succeeded, since this is the album with the least "human touch" to it. Most digital release I ever did.

Panic Chamber (Full-length 2009)

First concept album:

It starts with the woman who buries her firstborn child alive; it is the sacrifice she has to do to give the earth and its inhabitants their innocence back, if not the world will burn and collapse. Then she weeps for her child, questioning her deeds. The child has senses, and understands what is happening and tries to survive. The child also understands what the mother is doing, but has trouble coping with being the sacrificial lamb. But afterwards the sacrifice was worth nothing, so the mother reverses the ritual, because the world means nothing to her anymore without the infant. She inherits the physical child again, and caresses it in her arms. The World burns.

Apocryphal Stories (Full-length 2012)

This album took a long time to get done. It is tied to the direct response of the painting and writing/reading/receiving practice. The Apocryphal Stories is a beginning of weird tales, rumors and dirt. I am deeply interested in the new spiritual awakening some people have taken, at least here in Norway. I briefly touched upon moral concepts with Panic Chamber album, and I wanted to go further into that area. With this album and the paintings surrounding it I am slowly building my own iconography of worship. I choose almost blindly from different sources of religious iconography witch characters who interacts. I tried not to analyze what they would do to each other, but instead also interfere with my own creations. In time these creations of a million minds will fight and mutate with each other, have sex, breed and die at my will. To step on shoulders, feet and crouches is the purpose of this, and this is the stepping stone further. I could elaborate a lot on the theological blasphemy and creation at hand of this concept, but it is evolving, and it is more to come. Be it by paint, music or script.

Your latest releases come over a bit more experimental and have less of the conceptually clear approach. Is this the way on which you like to push your art?

Of course experiments will continue, if not I would not keep on. The search will continue. I experiment more with method, but I also have a more strict approach to concept of each release. That sounds may be diverse doesn't mean that the concept do not fit, in this case it is the contrary. Reason for the sounds being more experimental is to fit exactly to the concept of each word spoken, feeling being exposed, and the concept to be fulfilled. And hopefully more hate, disgust, lust, fulfillment, joy and questionable urges from the listener.

How have the responses on your art been? Are you able to reach out into the metal community as well?

((to editor)From the question I guess you are thinking about visual art?)

(note from the editor: actually I had the music in mind ... but speaking about your other art is fine as well).

I am an obscure artist in an international sense, so naturally the responses I get is mostly from people who like it. I do a lot of exhibitions and curate some. My work as an artist, painting and such, is mostly distanced from the music. Or to say it like this: Most folks at my exhibitions haven't heard my music, really. Not because I try to hide it, it is more the gap between the people who are going to exhibitions and the people at concerts I rarely play, or listens to these records.

About metal, there is so much shit called metal and I get disgusted by the word community. Still I make visuals for bands that I like and can communicate with and I play in some.

I have not been able to trace any lyrics of your music, but the use of vocals suggests at least the existence of them. Do you have written texts for your compositions or do you express some "free" ideas that come to your mind while recording the music?

There are lyrics, see next answer.

Furthermore, as the texts appear in a rather unintelligible kind of way – some quite extreme black metal screams at times –, it is quite impossible to make something out of them by merely listening to the compositions. Do you have a special reason for falling back on such an extreme facet? Is the listener not supposed to understand what is going on?

That is again a question of evolution. The Lyrical aspect have been important always, but also the improvisational factor. Hate, real and pure Hate, has been of utmost importance for me while doing vocals during the first years. Doing those vocals and music kept me from doing some excessive violence. It was a total release of hate, nothing else. When I started Utarm I ventilated this in the vocals of the first records, my friends at the time went for the other solutions. Vocals ventilated my disgust then, and as stated was a release of violence and bitterness towards absolutely everything. I have nurtured the vocals over the years to represent other aspects of my thoughts as well. I have a clear concept of what I want to portray, but my vocals are intelligible mostly, yes. Apocryphal Stories has some lyrics printed, but they are not in the right order. To cut it short-The lyrics are important to me, and they may come to the public some day.

The feeling present in the delivery has always been most important, as with good vocals you do not need to hear the words, you sense it in the way it is delivered.

What about samples? Is this something you like to use for your recordings? What would be your opinion on the wide range in which these appear today?

Yes, I have used a lot of samples. There is different kinds of samples though; Voice samples used to tell a story/underline the concept, or bits of sound, used as instrument, endless. Fieldrecordings, home, visiting a mountain, recording junkies at the subway or sneaking into a funeral. Samples is a great tool if the use fits its purpose, and I think at best it enhances the music to new levels. For example-Funeral Mist; the clever use of samples underlines the concept, makes the album whole. Lots of endless and useless music has been made because it is easy to sample a nice piece of sound, but that doesn't make the real sample a lesser piece of art either, it is how you use it that matters. everlasting topic!

What kind of equipment do you use? Has this changed over the years?

I use a wide range of instruments.

Voice and guitar is the main instrument, be it like more typical metal guitar, or with massive use of effects, looped etc. I also use lots of feedback loops, pedals, contact mics etc, piano, violin, organ, metal objects and saxophone and synth. In the beginning I recorded bits and pieces, then constructed everything in the computer. Now most of the recordings is done live then mix. Now I try to do as much as I can before going digital, but I still use it a lot. Tools are great, and I see no need to have some dogma of what is allowed and not. I was going to music school for years a youth and I know the notes, but I never use them.

Can you write a bit about your side projects?

Yes, I am delighted to...

My other solo project is Stabwound Empire. More towards power electronics/harsh noise. With Utarm I rarely play live, mostly release music. With S.E it is the opposite. S.E has been active for eight years, but live action is the main focus. This is raw and aggressive music for live purpose. Conceptually S.E is also more focused on "real life" events.

Noisestar and the Fall of Rome. This is a band with Kybermensch. The goal of this project was to blend the influence of epic and ambient soundtracks of underrated films with our touch. We have gone much further after our last lp, so next will be more vile.

Sturmgeist and the Fall of Rome. As the name says, this is N.S.Roma collaborating with Sturmgeist. He does vocals/lyrics over our music. More focused over his lyrical themes than our romanticism of the roman decay and rapist biker theme, maybe more of the glorious times before from us.

Gribberiket. This is primitive and desperate doom metal, dirty Sound. We started the band in 2008, first official release is out now on tape. Our lyrics is solely based on good writers themes. We are all avid readers, so someone in the band will find a good text, then we play and drink. All live recorded music.

How does your work as an artist and as a musician play out? Does one have an impact on the other? Is there a connection or maybe even a counterpoint in the way you use images for your recordings?

Yes, there is, as I briefly touched upon in describing the Apocryphal stories album. My studio is both where I play music and paint, my temple. So they are also touching upon another in the most physical sense. To me painting and playing music have a lot in common, they are tools to show what cannot be said nor written. It is also both creations I can get lost in for hours and days.

It is good, escapism with a purpose. I set my goal and refine the concept for as long time as it takes. From then on I have the work, and it is pure bliss, ritual purity. I could not do without any of these, and yes, they interfere seamlessly now.

Can you write a bit about your drawings, your techniques and styles? Why did you pick these in particular and it would be interesting to know whether you had a formal education in this respect. Can you name some painters that you can refer to as inspirations in this regard? What type are these pictures? Oil, water-colours, ink ... or?

I have studied art in various academies, ending in a Masters degree in fine art, seven years in total, so yes, formal training indeed.

As for techniques and styles, inspirations, it is simply endless. When I do a new piece I surely have a background of endless hours looking at/listening to works of masters I worship. At the same time this is a maelstrom of info in the back of my head. I question every piece I make, to see if I make an unconscious reference there that is out of place. About reference; Right now, yesterday I saw a great chunk of Asger Jorn paintings. I was guided to his paintings by another great painter here, Christian Tony Norum. In general, talking about inspiration of artists is just guidance, because we can only give names or words to give further googling.

I grew up adorning Italian minimalist painters and at the same time drawing trees I crawled in with ghosts I believed in. Now I still sometimes paint those trees and ghosts, even if I am educated and have tons of references, I just paint them when I wake up and want to paint, by instinct. What does this say? I still paint trees a lot, but people cannot see they are trees now, because they are a part of a concept I use for this particular piece. But it is the same tree! This is what you get when thinking too much about reference, a boring lecture from a narcissistic ego wanting to cum in your hair.

Technically, I use mostly acrylics and sometimes oil for painting, plus stuffed markers. For drawings I use a normal black pen. I also do some watercolor paintings. Everything is good really...clay and mould, old bones and shit. I painted with blood a lot, and if I should give an advice, better mix it good if you want the piece to stay in shape for more than a few days.

Do you sell your works or do you on a commission?

The commissions I have done could be counted on one hand over ten years, for good allies. I sell works also.

And some words about installations, if you do not mind. In a previous edition I had the chance to interview with Greek band Putsum and the person behind it combines music with visuals (instalments, rituals, images, fire, ice, videos etc.) on stage, is this also the case in respect to Utarm?

If the will is there, why not go all the way? That is the reason I play live very rare, because venues do not allow me to do what I want. Sure I could play some songs with session musicians, I have done that in the past with no pleasure. My goal is to have lots of animals on stage, altar, sacrifice. That is my ultimate goal, so last time I played live we had live ritual slaughter of a dead animal, circle of 13 human wisdom teeth, hair, bone, paintings, blood. I will not do it again if I cant go all the way.

When it comes to the design of black metal releases, then these tend to be rather explicit and direct in terms of their portrayal of various subjects: religion, deities, sexuality. Your works are more metaphorical and not as confrontational as the ones outlined before. Therefore, it would be interesting to know why you avoid this one facet and how you see the drastic way in which the black metal scene deals with it.

I think what is crucial is to make the difference between art made for the sake of being art itself, or illustration of an idea. Artworks for Black Metal releases is often made for a purpose, and that is to visualize the music and lyrics of said band. With that said, I think also a lot of Black Metal bands are following a certain tradition, and that there is a strength in this tradition. Sure, it can be boring with goatreplicas and pentagrams, inverted crosses and black/white Xerox covers, but when done right it is very powerful, it has something unique and strong very few other genres of music possesses, and if you pardon my academics, it is transgressive through tradition. The image in itself becomes a message of great power. This is hard to put in words...But to give you an example: Liturgia put out a record last year, Black/white coverphoto with corpsepainted guys in a winterforest. Music is sloppy played simple chords with some cheap synth. But it is perfected, it crystallizes everything Black Metal is. Simple and pure. I worship this. The concept is genuine and genius.

Thing is, I have never set out to design Black Metal. Black Metal is a savage beast, and I paint it sometimes when it is at work in our world.

This bestial world is the world I am living in, and I see it as it is, including music and sounds I hear. I am an absolute devotee of abstraction, and I would like to take it further, see what lies beyond. Blur the lines between everything. If you do a ritual, be it a sacrifice to your gods, or a mundane ritual of getting something, you do not not see it as spelled out words before you, you make a visual projection. Im there, fucking your projection in the ass.

I would also use this opportunity to hate all generic black metal releases of course, but they are too many. I find that more often than not a great release of music has great visuals in this genre, because the minds behind think of it as a whole world of its own.

As you have had a chance to play on stage, it would be nice to know what your experiences have been. What kind of persons visit your concerts and what kind of feedback do you receive? How do the folks from the metal scene react to your way of making sounds/music?

As I mentioned before, I do not play much live with Utarm. But when I did last time, people from the "metal community" was most pleased, as the people who came was expecting pure violent chaos, and they got just that, blood and chaos.

Noise bands tend to interpret their music on stage and do not want to perform in such a way as they do on their recordings. Is something similar true of your band as well? Do you prefer 1:1 cover versions or rather some kind of interpretations?

Hell no to both and all, always. Without the right circumstances concerts are just showcases for people who like to play music, and it is too much of that. But noise music is a lot about improvisation, and I like that a lot. I have seen noise gigs performed by 50+ guys in regular clothes being far more extreme than metal. Noise impro is great, it has live energy that is uncompromised when done right. When I do gigs with Utarm i take both, improvising with written songs. Improvisation in my chamber is how this band was built, so it would be failure to not do this live.

Is there a chance to hear some cover version from your band at some point? As far as I could have made out, none of your releases has had one, or?

Nothing.

Your opinion on the small amount of copies spread made available in terms of noise releases?

I think it differs. My first releases was in small numbers, they still are, but being at least a couple of hundreds. Limited to 20 etc. is just stupid and desperate marketing attempts now, but reasonable twelve years ago. It was a time when releases was that limited because of small response, but then you could always get a new tape dub from the label. Point is, limiting before was because only a few people was interested, and no one else would care. Now it is to get people to jump ou and buy before it is to late. Not only related to noise, I think.

How do you see the noise scene in general? Are there aspects you are able to enjoy, something that creates a certain curiosity in you or does it feel a bit too confuse and messy????

There is a lot of music out there that I find to be great! I buy as much music as I can, and listen to music for many hours each day, for different purposes. Im not a guy to ask about hidden treasures in todays noise scene, as im not following closely, but I keep my eye on certain finnish distros and buys from them. Special Interest mag++, and I have some good friends that filters good releases for me as I rely on their taste. Too little time.

Do you have some forthcoming releases? What are the plans for the future?

Skullflower/Utarm split coming out soon on a Yorkshire label.

In case someone is interested in your music, how and where can this person buy your stuff?

Turgidanimal, handmadebirds, roggbif, alchemicsoudmuseum and recordsofthefleshgod.

How can people get in touch with you? What Internet sites do you use?

Depends what they want.

Some closing comments if you like

Licht. הילל בן-שחר נגדעת לארץ חולש על-גוים: MAY נהרה: lucifers עשי

Hill day brune poklesu
Hans rike komme RØV
rike dei satans del makeøse del det
Miten menestyä siinä ilo
Da farin ciki
i min glede er lucifers glede Da farin ciki na farin ciki lucifers"
Zo vonden wij bij nacht .

Interview / review section

BEITHÍOCH

Why don't you start off by introducing the band a bit? When and by whom had it been started? Who would conduct this interview?

Beithíoch is a black/doom/death metal band based in the north west of Ireland. I don't remember when it started, probably around 05 or 06 – at the very least the first release (a compilation of demo material) was put out in 07. It has at various times been a solo project and a collaboration between a small number of people, but the specifics of personality are not really that interesting.

Why don't you continue where we left off at the previous interview: “Dúchas” (2011) and “Summoning the Past” (2012) are the releases which have seen the light of day since then. How do these differ from the previous albums and how would you describe the development of Beithíoch's music?

Beithíoch was initially an ambient black metal band that (before Dúchas) was gradually growing more ambient and less metal. This resulted in an EP that I'm not very fond of and an album of predominantly dark ambient music tinged with black metal elements – which although quite unique was not where I felt Beithíoch should go, so was kept unreleased. The next period was an identity crisis for the project, figuring out what exactly Beithíoch should be through some collaboration and some writing of more material that, again, was not to be, and not released. Dúchas was a bit rushed, but was a way of breaking the deadlock – a way of saying right now at least this is what Beithíoch sounds like. As a result it is flawed, but has some good moments, and was important for figuring out where things should go. A new album has now been started, on which things seem to be finally clicking into place, and on which Beithíoch will define itself very much as a metal band. Summoning the Past was created as a way of casting light on what is to come - by taking some older tracks and recreating them to sound as they would if they'd been conceived now.

What had been your reasons for offering another instrumental album? Are the “An Sealgaire” (2009) as well as the “Dúchas” (2011) recordings another side that will have its place in the broader context of your band?

I/we had no interest in recording vocals at the time of those releases. The intention was to create something on which the music could speak for itself, without the distraction of bad vocals. You can decide for yourself how successful that was. Since then vocals have been used on Summoning the Past - which I think gets the balance right, with some chanting/spoken stuff, some (quite obscured) singing and some tortured screams – all to add different shades of atmosphere without making the vocals the focal point.

How do you translate Dúchas by the way and how does this name play out in an otherwise “wordless” recording?

Dúchas doesn't translate directly into English, but roughly means 'native' or 'instinctive' or 'heritage'. It is a feeling of being connected to somewhere, more than it is an objective thing. The idea of the record was to create an atmosphere like trudging through a land like Ireland as a hunter gatherer at the time of the ice sheets receding (the end of the last glacial period/ice age) – cold, stony, desolate and unsympathetic but also mysterious and majestic. A bit like the visual component: <http://hiarcrow.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/duchas1.jpg>

Starting with “An Sealgaire” all of your albums had a particular type of cover artwork, which presents some kind of shore or coastline to the viewer. Over the years this impression becomes more flesh as well as concrete. Can you elaborate on your reasons for adding this elements in such a particular kind of way?

An Sealgaire is very deliberately the most primitive and primordial Beithíoch work, musically and visually. I imagined the cover image like a photograph that can look back in time – with the further back you go the more obscure, elemental and difficult to discern an image becomes. Dúchas, if you can imagine it, is a picture taken of something further into the future than Sealgaire, but still quite far back, with Summoning the Past closer in time again, and (potentially) the next release being closer still to the present and therefore visually clearer. That sounds a bit trippy, but of course that is the point. Roughly speaking, the thinking was that An Sealgaire represents the Paleolithic (lone hunters), Dúchas represents the Mesolithic (small tribes) and the forthcoming album is the Neolithic or possibly Bronze Age (larger tribes, warriors, settlements etc).

I don't fully know why rivers/shores were selected for the images, there's something maybe about the meeting of two powerful natural forces (the land, the water), and something about them that is oddly timeless – in spite of the fact coastlines change/erode and rivers are always moving on.

It seems strange that on “Summoning the Past” (2012), a phrase with a certain narcissistic undertone, the picture would be very sharp and clear. Is it not rather the other way around that in revisiting the days that have gone by we have to face the limits of your capabilities and understanding, which can result in a certain incomprehensiveness of previous actions and thoughts, due to the blurriness of oblivion?

That is an interesting interpretation, and one I hadn't consciously considered too much. Deliberately the image is still not crystal clear, but it is definitely less obscure than the last two pieces of visual art (some of the reasons for which I talked about above). Perhaps unconsciously it relates to the fact Beithíoch now has a much clearer idea of what it is, and there is now a certain level of clarity over decisions that have been made musically that was not always there. The music is also now more definite (metal) and less obscure/occultic (ambient, trance-like).

The title is quite cocky, but it seems appropriate as a statement of intent. Beithíoch should channel the metal of old (Hellhammer/Celtic Frost, Angel Witch, Bathory, Sepultura – even some of the old prog like King Crimson, Uriel, Hawkwind, Tangerine Dream...), and should be a fantastical, mythic evocation of the ancient world.

“Summoning the Past” is your latest release, but the music on it is not all new. What tracks and for what reasons did make it on this output? Can you write a bit about the differences between the versions? Why did you not rerecord entire albums?

The tracks were all picked because it felt like more could have been done with them than had been. The arrangements are better; there's more layering of parts, more variation and the mood flows better in all of them. Other tracks were considered, but it was never really thought to do whole albums; at some point the backwards looking has to stop – before it becomes a distraction from the present and/or the future. Perhaps one day more will be re-recorded, maybe more of Aisling Dhorcha.

... and how do you look back on your first attempts? Are you still able to enjoy these?

They are all quite formative and incomplete. Dúchas is the most musically well formed, Aisling Dhorcha is the strongest atmospherically, but it is entirely possible to surpass both of those albums on those terms. Future Beithíoch music will not be “nearly there” or “interesting but incomplete”, it must be as good as it possibly can be.

Some previously unreleased music made an appearance on this release as well, but it remains unclear how many years these tracks actually date back. Therefore, how do they fit into the broader context of your “released” music?

They are both in fact old pieces that were never released, although the recording used of ‘A Oisín, is Fada do Shuan’ is recent, and so the track has been updated a little from its original form. They date to the time just after Aisling Dhorcha was recorded, and were always going to be used on something, but never quite fit anywhere.

Is there any chance to see the physical release hit actually the surface at some point in the future?

We'd like that, but there has been some problems with the label, so it is off for now at least. No hard feelings on my part, just move on.

Some more general questions towards the end:

What is the role of noise, (dark) ambient, repetition, counterpoints as well as the aspect of complexity vs. minimalism in terms of Beithíoch music?

Noise and ambience are there to make the albums as a whole flow better, although sometimes they actually end up being quite stand-out tracks. The aim always is to make the albums a complete journey, rather than a collection of songs.

To those unfamiliar with your art, what would you describe as the core essences of your music?

The core of the music is old-school metal – from Black Sabbath to Amebix, Autopsy to early Immortal, Iron Maiden to Sarcophago. The earlier Beithíoch material had a very noticeable Ildjarn/Darkthrone/Burzum influence, which is still there but has receded gradually as the band has found its own voice. Above all though it's the spirit of older metal, which is missing from nearly everything since, that I see Beithíoch as having serious kinship with, and which has almost nothing to do with contemporary metal.

Is there any chance to see/hear a cover version on a release? Do you have a track in mind, which you would like interpret in one way or another?

I'm not against doing covers in a live setting, but unless they present something very different from the original I don't really see the point of doing covers on record.

Do you have some forthcoming releases? What are the plans for the future?

The main plan for the future is to finish writing and record the new album, which will be a real step forward from previous Beithíoch work. Tracks so far are longer, more epic, less repetitive and more varied in mood. I don't want to give away too much about it, but I think conceptually and emotionally it'll give people a lot more to think about than previous albums.

In case someone is interested in your music, how and where can this person buy/download your stuff?

The full version of the new mini album Summoning the Past (complete with 18mins of bonus tracks) can be streamed and bought at beithioch.bandcamp.com in various formats. Or, a shortened version of the mini album (no bonus tracks) can be got in mp3 at hiartcow.com – where much of the band's back catalogue can also be downloaded for free.

How can people get in touch with you? What Internet sites do you use?

People can email the band at beithiochmetal@gmail.com, or they can go to facebook.com/beithioch, or the aforementioned bandcamp.com or hiarctow.com pages.

Some closing comments if you like

Thank you for another very thoughtful interview!

Beithíoch – Summoning The Past (2012)

(Ireland; Black Metal, Ambient, Noise, Drone)

5 / 7 Tracks (MP3 – Self-released) - _ _ - (24:48 / 43:06)

<http://beithioch.bandcamp.com/>

Some bands merely re-release their music for the masses, others revisit their early works and reinterpret them from a fresh perspective, adding nuances, which have entered their oeuvre over the years, but had not been part of it earlier. The Irish band Beithíoch would be an example for the latter one and on their latest output “Summoning The Past” some insights on how to do such a thing can be examined. Music from different stages of the band's evolution has seen a revamping and presents itself in such a way as to be of interest for those who happen to have followed the band over the years as well as those, who have stumbled over them only very recently. Luckily, this release can be downloaded for free from the bandcamp entry, while another version with two additional compositions has been made available for purchase on the same site; originally designated for a physical release. The latter one offers two tracks, whose combined length is nearly twenty minutes.

Of course, the performance is a bit random and does not have a consistent red line so to speak, as could be expected from an 'ordinary' release. Therefore, the listener dives through a variety of concepts and styles: metal, ambient, noise. And even though the term (dark) ambient, which can be associated with Beithíoch for numerous reasons – see: An Sealgair and Dúchas –, might be a rather daring supposition after a couple of minutes into this release, it is nevertheless an important descriptor for placing the band properly in the broader spectrum of the black metal scene. Elements of it are still apparent, but the title gives it away a bit: here, the past receives more attention over the recently taken endeavours. Not surprisingly, “Arm Na Déithe” has become quite a ferocious and intense piece of music, which leaves little doubt about the intention and direction of the band; something that had not always been too clear on some earlier pieces of art.

To get a glimpse of the change in direction and concept it seems proper to compare the versions that are available to the listener and a good one in this respect would be the aforementioned track “Arm Na Déithe” from the 2008 output Aisling Dhorcha. Several differences reveal themselves readily and on various levels. The overall length has dropped considerably (6:49 vs. 5:09), the dynamics have seen a shift and the atmosphere is less mystical (cavernous) but rather aggressive now. Also the change in the voice has an unmistakable impact. Once it had been an unintelligible murmuring/screaming and it merged with the overall sound on the release, while the latest move towards a clean voice sets a stark new counterpoint to character of the music. In some respect this would be true of the entire performance. It feels fresher and does not have this feeling of artificial limitation, like it can be discovered on their previous three releases. Also the general idea breaks a bit away from what bands tend to offer in the underground. The song-writing has a good touch of complexity to it and Beithíoch fall back on minimalism only as a facet in order to get their idea across and not as an overall conceptual imperative. This is especially the case on this recording. Each of the compositions are different, but have enough character to be recognizable as a work of this band from Ireland. Astounding is the density of this release, as no calmer interludes attempt to break the flow of the atmosphere.

A counterpoint can be made out in the last composition Tír na nÓg, whose drone/ambient style lacks the heaviness and aggressiveness, which can be found throughout the rest of the recording. Furthermore, it does not have any vocals and meanders on for a considerable amount of time; 13:04 to be precise. It brings the experiments of the band with dark ambient to a certain extreme level: the noise of the metal facets mixed with the incomprehensible sound of the ambient. Here the atmosphere reigns of the concreteness, which so many metal bands tend to strive for. With two prior releases in a non-metal concept the Irish band sets a distinct chord on this element again, which might foreshadow the further progression on the forthcoming releases. Maybe this juxtaposition is necessary in order to unravel the full potential of this band, maybe a limitation to the metal elements alone would reduce it all unnecessarily.

“Summoning The Past” feels like a step in the right direction and at least recognition, even though not in its fullest, that the adventure to the dark ambient genre had not been able to offer a thoroughly convincing type of music. Black metal is the core essences of this release and in a rather aggressive interpretation at that. It is certainly not music for the purists. Those who happen to have a certain fancy for how music in this genre can be re-interpreted and be brought to certain extremes, to those this band and their latest art is definitely recommended.

SCHREI AUS STEIN

Why don't you start off by introducing the band a bit? When and by whom had it been started? Who would conduct this interview?

Schrei aus Stein was started by R. Hagen (me!) about 4 years ago, and I remain the sole member.

Would you mind to write a bit about the background of your band, its name and the style of music that you play?

The band came about as an idea I had while doing some winter hiking in the Indian Peaks in Colorado, mulling over some riffs and rhythms in my head. My idea was to do a sort of ambient black metal album (like Procer Veneficus, Velvet Cacoon, etc.) but to make it a little bit more rhythmically dynamic. The band's name is borrowed from a Werner Herzog film that showcases Cerro Torre, a particularly gnarly looking peak in Patagonia.

The last interview had been done after the release of your second album Tsisnaasjini. What has happened since?

In terms of music production, I had to scrap the recording computer I'd been using for about a decade and get set up with new programs on a new machine. It definitely altered my procedures and capabilities, some new limitations but also some new potential...there's nothing like a fresh start I suppose.

A tape that is about to see the light of day soon and it has the title Philosophie; German for philosophy. How does it fit into the broader spectrum of your concept and band? What kind of music can be found on it?

On the one hand it's more of the same, a fairly ambient-ish take on black metal. It's not quite as obviously mountain-themed as the other SaS collections, although the feeling of the recordings remains similar. It's a little bit more indulgent on the synth side of things and heads through some harmonic areas that are rather like mid-19th century classical music moving by at ½ speed..

Why do you spread it on tape and what are the reasons for offering an additional track with the digital download? Is it generally not the other way around? Will it come as professionally printed?

I've been pretty intrigued by the way that cassettes have managed to hang on and even experience something of a renaissance as a format for limited edition releases. I found a press that does short-runs of "cassingles" so it will be professionally produced. The reason for offering the bonus track with the digital portion is simple logistics of making a 20-minute cassette. I know people usually use additional tracks as a carrot to sell physical copies, but in this case that wouldn't really work. Anyone who gets the cassette from a distro will still get a download code so he or she can get the digital files.

Can you write a bit about the rather intriguing cover artwork? Who has been responsible for it? Why does it differ from the conception used for your other outputs and their unmistakable depiction of mountainous sceneries?

In this case, the cover was sort of the inspiration for the EP. It's a Gustav Klimt painting from the early 20th century entitled Philosophie. I found the imagery so arresting that I wanted to make the music to meet it.

It seems natural to ask the following: do you have some favourite philosophers (and books of them)?

In terms of philosophy, I tend to get the most use out of folks like Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu, even if a lot of their work is probably more accurately described as cultural theory or sociology. Foucault's Discipline and Punish and Bourdieu's overall concepts of symbolic capital are incredibly illuminating. I'm also fascinated with Georges Bataille and the notion of extreme experience as a gateway to transcendence.

Why do you use the German tongue anyway? It is not too common to see bands from outside its own sphere that would apply it. Are parts of the lyrics even in German?

I only used German on the first record, which utilized pieces of 19th century German nature poetry in the lyrics. Everything else since has been in English. The name of the band comes from a Herzog film about mountaineering, and I rather liked its ambiguousness.

Another forthcoming release has the title Cervin. Can you elaborate a bit on the background of this name and how it fits into the broader context of your music?

Cervin is the Italian name for the Matterhorn, one of the prizes of 20th century alpinism. It's a return to the mountainous theme that has driven much of the other releases.

It is a strange release and feels more like a compilation of ideas. While the first two compositions offer some kind of cohesion, the third and fourth fall out of the order in some respect. Why is that so? Why did you feel it necessary to stretch the music to such boundaries?

If I remember right, the third piece was actually the first one I started working on. It guess it does have a flavor that's a little different from the other two in terms of its structure and harmonies. I do like to keep things a little surprising. The last track feels sort of like a "Side B" to me, even though that's a relic of a bygone era of analog releases.

Towards the end of the tracks the music tends to fade out somehow. Is all the momentum with which they open lost in the end? Does it all have to merge in an indistinguishable noisy something?

I think of it as being akin to the fadeout at the end of a pop song...giving the impression that it goes on forever. Since I came to this project having been working in ambient music for many years, I tend to like things that seem to suspend time. I've always liked the effect of music disintegrating into chaos, although I have noticed that it's become a bit of a standard procedure for me...so in the future I'm hoping to switch it up somewhat.

How does the ambient/drone/noise track Hive and your general direction go together? Is this something that might have a larger impact in the future; in the sense of comparably shorter tracks between the "ordinary" ones that would create some kind of counterpoint?

Possibly – in some senses "Hive" makes this release almost like a Schrei aus Stein / encomiast split. I felt like the piece was too harsh for an Encomiast track and, as I mentioned, I liked how it created a sort of "Side B" to the black metal tracks. It's also unique in that it's essentially a "live" track with no overdubs, using a network of analog synths and other gizmos.

What kind of equipment do you use?

Most of this was all done in Ableton Live with a few software synths and samples, a semi-hollow bodied guitar, a middle-of-the-road bass, and a few choice fuzz pedals. I've lately been using a program called Paulstretch for some of the extended ambient tones...it's completely ridiculous. You can take a 3 minute wav file and make it last for hours.

How does the recording take place? Do you use a professional studio?

I do it all at home on my laptop and a pretty basic recording setup. All I have is a little break-out box with stereo XLR & ¼" inputs.

How long does it take for you to get a composition done? Do you scrap a lot of ideas? When it comes to your releases, then in what amount do their differ from each other in terms of this?

It does take a long time for me to be happy enough with something, even if the actual composition takes place over a short period. I'll tinker with it a lot afterwards. A lot of things do get scrapped in the process, or at least reworked until they're unrecognizable from the original intent. Philosophie was probably the fastest I've worked, mostly because I had the two song ideas pretty fully formed in my head and they came out satisfactorily.

Why do drums have such a large impact in your music? Especially on the tape release their role has to be discussed and emphasized. It seems strange that the minimalism is driven by such intense beats.

I suppose I would think of it as being more akin to a krautrock kind of vibe, where the rhythm has a certain repetitive power that lulls even as it propels. The minimalism of much black metal tends to neglect the rhythmic aspect a lot I think.

Do you feel that your music is depressing?

Not really, but what the listeners get out of it isn't really any of my business. I do think it inspires an introspective and mindset, though....and I suppose some people might find that experience depressing. I can say that it doesn't arise from any sort of depression or mental anguish on my end, in so far as that matters.

Why don't you use samples? With topics or rather concept such as yours the sound of winds, the cracking of ice, the screaming of eagles, all this would be quite appropriate for Schrei aus Stein's music, but you do not provide any. What keeps you away from such elements?

I think it's too obvious, frankly. It reminds me a little of a music video where the lyric might be about a car, so the video shows us a car at that moment...there's no subtlety to that kind of literalism. I think music is usually more interesting without such specific references, although sometimes they can be pretty satisfying. For example, what viking metal album would feel complete without at least one "battle scene" section?

What about lyrics? It is quite impossible to understand something of them, due to the way the vocals have been manipulated. Therefore, what role does this aspect play in your concept? How important is it for you to use this element in your art, since it appears as nothing more than a facet?

I like the human element to be present, even if the lyrics aren't decipherable. To some extent the lyrics become like my own little secret...and to be honest I sometimes feel like I'm hiding them a little even though I want people to know they're there. I could see myself doing an instrumental record at some point though, a la Deafest.

Is there any chance to hear clean vocals, chants or the sort at some point in the future? Or some other instruments like an Alphorn for instance?

I wouldn't rule anything out, but I can't say as I have plans for any of that. Clean vocals might be really interesting. I've been listening a bit to fellow Utahns Caladan Brood and the choral effects they put together are quite inspiring, even if I know I could never pull it off like they do. I tend to dislike it when artists resort to recitations. Nothing is more boring than that strain of neofolk music where a guy just moribundly strums an acoustic guitar and recites over it. I think the only people who could pull that kind of thing off were Woody Guthrie and Gil Scott-Heron. Some proper chanting might be interesting though. I've got a reproduction of a medieval shawm that I've wanted to bring in but haven't ever managed to find a good place...maybe on the next one.

Can you write a bit about your other project Encomiast?

Encomiast is an ambient/dark ambient project I've been working on since 1999 or so. I've released about a dozen albums on various labels over the years...I'm probably most proud of 139 Nevada, a double-disc set based off of field recordings from an allegedly haunted theater in an old mining town in the mountains. I still occasionally work on Encomiast material...the latest release is gravity is very compelling, a "suite" of sorts made from material I created for a theatrical production in 2011. The website is encomiast.bandcamp.com

How much of Encomiast can be found in Schrei aus Stein?

A good bit I think, especially the fact that I tend to work a lot with sculpting the sounds and tones and can't seem to shy away from indulging in lengthy ambient sections.

How has your music developed over the years? Where have you started and what is the concept you like to approach or realize? Do you see your band rooted in the metal scene?

I think it's gotten more and more "experimental," or at least that it's started going further afield from the more traditional black metal vibe that I began with. Each release has its own flavor though, and the concept and approach isn't always clear until things begin to wrap up.

I think Schrei aus Stein will always have its roots in metal, although I can't say I feel like it's a part of a local scene or anything like that.

Would you mind to name a few albums that you enjoyed recently?

I've been enjoying the new Caladan Brood album as I mentioned, also catching up with A Pregnant Light and Book of Sand. I'll often just hop on Bandcamp and sift through stuff while I'm at work. The Sol Y Nieve and Flenser labels are pretty much essential.

Is there ever a chance to see you play live and on stage?

I doubt Schrei aus Stein would ever perform live. I can't envision trying to put together a backup band and playing alone with backing tracks sounds deeply unsatisfying. If the opportunity ever arose, it would likely be essentially a drone concert....fairly indistinguishable from when I perform as Encomiast.

Do you have some forthcoming releases? What are the plans for the future?

Apart from the self-released cassette and Cervin (Crucialblast 2013/14), I'm working on a split with fellow Rocky Mountain black metal artist Deafest that we're hoping to have out in 2014. As far as other projects, I've got a new tape from a one-off death metal project called Immensité up at immensite.bandcamp.com. I also play in a couple of ensembles that will have recordings available soon: a crusty doom + harsh electronics trio Curseworship (curseworship.bandcamp.com) and the more grindcore-oriented Burn Your World (burnyourworldofficial.bandcamp.com). I've got a lot of irons in the fire, lol.

In case someone is interested in your music, how and where can this person buy your stuff?

I've got most of my material available through Bandcamp, and a few distros like Crucialblast and Aquarius Records. iTunes and other sites have some material available as well.

How can people get in touch with you? What Internet sites do you use?

Bandcamp is my go-to site currently, and people can contact me through it. Most of my projects also have Facebook pages.

Some closing comments if you like

Thanks very much for the interesting interview. I like that you ask challenging questions that require thought and justification on my end...as opposed to just asking "who are your influences?" and so forth. Long live A Dead Spot of Light!

Schrei aus Stein – Philosophie (2013)

(USA; Ambient, Black Metal, Drone)

2+1 Tracks (Tape/MP3 – Self-released) -_-_- (17:09; 24:30)

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Schrei-aus-Stein/201662821062>, <http://schreiausstein.bandcamp.com/>

While writing these lines the album Cervin of the American band Schrei aus Stein has still not seen the light of day, but in order to keep the attention of the fans a bit, a cassette with two long tracks has surfaced and "two plus one" in the online version; normally it is the other way around. Anyway, conceptually it follows somewhat close to what the band had presented earlier, but in a more eclectic kind of way. The track list is as follows:

1. Philosophie
2. Auf einer Berg
3. Neverending Peak (bonus)

Despite a certain focus on attempting to maintain this mountainous atmosphere, the distinct combination of elements from the black metal, drone and ambient genres, continues to play a vital role on this release, but it appears more varied and conceptually broader. Those two earlier albums and their clear-cut patterns can both be cited as important in respect to this tape release. Neither alone play a major part, but with influences from each of them a strange as well as confusing harmony unfolds itself. With rhythm models on the one hand, with guitars and drums and what not, Schrei aus Stein take the listener in the realm of the ordinary, while pushing the same person away soon after and once the definite heads off into the blurry fog of noise and drone. The music of this American band covers a good amount of facets, whose core is rather some kind of atmosphere than some type of explicit musical direction.

It is such a strange thing to experience the progression from the concrete towards the incomprehensible. Again and again melodies are allowed to open the compositions, are allowed to unfold their special charm, while in the end they are all doomed to loose themselves in a realm in which it all becomes blurry. It is not messy, like noise bands tend to deal with this aspect now and then, no, here it is rather the distance between the listener and the band that receives some kind of push. Yes, one feels a bit lost at times... and lacking direction. Sadly, the physical environment is actually as such as to be rather bereft of persons that could be of help in this regard, whereby a good amount of impressions are up for speculation. Do all sceneries feel and sound alike? To find arguments to counter this claim should not be too difficult.

Despite this limitation – subjective perspective –, the music does actually feel quite convincing on many levels. The layers and the sounds are executed quite well; the same is equally true for the preceding albums. Ross Hagen, the person behind this project, definitely knows what he is doing and benefits from his years of experience. Unlike a lot of bands from the black metal genre, the emphasis is placed on the layers and their final structure and not on how to craft something that resembles a black metal composition, while something else works as some kind of appendix. The term “ambient black metal” should be understood literally in this regard.

Some additional words need to be spent on the bonus track. It differs not so much in style as in concept. It offers the rather conventional metal facets from the beginning to the end, while the characteristic facets had been woven in between or around these. Also the last minute does not have this messiness of the other compositions.

The writer of these lines is in a very comfortable position. Why? Well, this person has already listened to and written on the forthcoming release Cervin and it is possible to place this tape in the evolution of the band accordingly. Philosophie feels like a step in between, a transition whose outcome is still unclear; especially with the things that will come in the back of the head. A reflection of what had been achieved with a leap into the void ahead. Nothing new ... somehow ... but interesting nonetheless. New facets are presented on this recording, new small interpretation on the distinct way of merging black metal, ambient and drone. Purists of the metal genre might find the performance a bit boring, though.

THY SINISTER BLOOM

Why don't you start off by introducing the band a bit? When and by whom had it been started? Who would conduct this interview?

Currently, the band consists of Bren Mullen (drums, percussion & electronics), Cory Sloan (bass & guitar) & Robin Bailey (guitar & fx) who is me, partaking of this interview!

The band in essence began when Cory & myself, were invited to work with the then three existing members of the doom/death band Embodiment, one of whom was Bren. Friendships & musical bonds were forged and have withstood the test of time up to today.

Around 20 years ago Thy Sinister Bloom had seen the light day. I hope this does not make you feel too old, but this should be mentioned in an interview. So, how do you look back at these early days and on the Irish metal scene?

I feel old anyway, because I am old! My metal scene days began around 1990, a time when local metal gigs were few and far between, but we had a decent run of big name foreign bands play in Dublin regularly. My memories of that time are mixed, what with hindsight and the relative ease of access to music we now experience in the digital age. I remember with fondness the youthful energy of playing music and organizing gigs, the fearless naivety of dreams of achieving underground stardom and the simple pleasures of a letterbox full of tapes, records or zines from all corners of the globe. I also remember the hardships involved in being part of a scene that society tended to either ignore or hold in disdain and being constantly badgered by parents and peers about metal being just a teenage phase and not worth investing time and money in.

I'm happy to see that the negatives have continually been ignored by generations and that the scene stills exists, but as expanded upon later in the interview, various factors align to ensure that it always remains small and restricted.

What had been the band Embodiment, which later became TSB? Why did you never record something under this moniker?

Embodiment had only rehearsed a few times doing cover versions and to my knowledge had not written any original material prior to when Cory and I joined. This was in October 1993 and Jeff (the then vocalist) and Bren had changed the name and the planned direction of the band very much into the vein of the Thy Sinister Bloom that Cory and I began to work with.

Is there a special story or idea behind the name 'Thy Sinister Bloom'? Do you have a source of inspiration in this regard?

The story goes that a colleague of Bren had created a painting called "Sinister Bloom" which had great resonance with both him and Jeff and they "borrowed" the name, as it fitted the beauty and melancholy that would become the essence of our music and lyrics. I didn't realise until a while later that these words also appeared in "Symphonairé..." by My Dying Bride. They were a great influence on us back then in any case, so I guess there was some respectful tribute being paid also!

Your early music marks quite a contrast to the early days of the Irish metal scene. Leaving all the heavy metal and hard rock stuff aside, death as well as thrash metal had been quite prominent after 1986, while your releases did not have this intensity and aggressiveness. Can you write a bit about your reasons for playing such a peculiar type of metal?

First, on a personal level, my reason for joining the band was to escape the world of Death Metal that I had been involved in previously. I wasn't enjoying that field of music and had become quite disconnected with the genre from both a listening and playing point of view, so it was a great relief to engage myself in a different form of music that definitely meant more to me on a personal and soulful level.

This occurred around the time when Doom/Death was in its infancy, but definitely gaining slowly in popularity and exposure, so it was no surprise that we started our musical journey with a great deal of melody in mind.

If memory serves me right, the direction that we decided to take was uncommon in Ireland at the time, with most other bands forging a Death or Black Metal route, but the scene, like the island was small anyway, so there was no glut of bands all doing the same thing.

Can you name bands or albums that played an impact back then? Are you still able to enjoy this type of music?

Definitely for me, Anathema and My Dying Bride were the two main bands of impact at that time, and along with Paradise Lost, Cathedral and Sleep, would be the main reason for dragging my ears away from death metal and to seek metal that to me had more melody and substance I guess. Other bands that inspired us collectively early on would have been Sevenchurch, Godsend, Solstice, Esoteric, Celestial Season, Acrimony, Electric Wizard (also in their Thy Grief Eternal/Eternal phases), Solitude Aeternus, etc, etc!!

I wouldn't listen to very much of these regularly today, however I do hold many of these bands along with some early Death Metal in a halcyon glaze of fondness!!

How did fans, magazines, labels react to your demos? Why did you never spread any of your material "professionally"; i.e. with a backing of a label?

We got great reception to our first demo released in 1995 (Thy Temperate Veil) to be honest. I remember us doing a lot of fanzine interviews and most reviews that I saw were highly praising in general. We also generated vague label interest (nothing of too much note though) and were close to releasing a 10" (which was going to be "Serien Falls") with a UK label, but once that didn't come to fruition, never took the band any further!

Thy Temperate Veil / A Vanity Lost sold 1500 copies? At least according to the bandcamp entry. That is quite a lot for a mere demo. Also Fragrant Suncry, A Scented Memoriam has supposedly been spread in the hundreds. How had you been able to get this done?

Not sure of an exact figure, but we used to get pro-cassette runs of 500 back then and we definitely did three runs of Thy Temperate Veil. We all worked very hard in regard to tape trading with other bands and tape traders, writing to fanzines and communicating with distros. Jeff especially so, who seemed to spend his whole existence writing letters & trading tapes! He also distributed a lot of promos and rehearsals this way, so the word was definitely spread far and wide. But, it wouldn't surprise me if one day soon I hear from one of us that they just found a box of 500 tapes in the darkest depths of their parent's attic!!

Before plunging deeper into TSB and therefore also to the modern time, a small side step towards two other bands might also be of interest: Misanthropy / Fifth Dominion (I). Robin Bailey had been active with these two bands, while Cory Sloan played in Fifth Dominion (II) (note from the editor: to understand the difference between FD I and II, please read the special section in the 21st edition of this magazine) as well as in Arcane Sun. Why don't you share some of your experiences with these projects? How do you look back on these bands?

As with my previous answer regarding the early metal scene, my looking back is with both fondness and frustration in equal measure. I can only speak for the first phase of the two bands, but I'm glad I was part of it and I'm also glad that it ended when it did, as I went on to be part of something better and more rewarding for myself!

When I wrote the series on Misanthropy/Fifth Dominion/Arcane Sun I was surprised to realize that you had left the band after the 1994 Promo, because afterwards the band would move more towards TSB and add doom as well as ambient elements to their concept. Were you still in touch with the members from your previous band and how did/do you see the development of their music?

Yeah, but they were still operating very much in a music informed by death/black metal music, which I had a rapidly decreasing interest in at that stage. We were still in touch (and are still today!) when they were doing their demos as Ireland is a very small metal community, Dublin being even smaller, so it was difficult not to be!

I was happy to hear them take Fifth Dominion in a more focused and melodic direction, but apart from sharing two members with the band I had been in, it was by then effectively a "new" venture anyhow.

Did you enjoy the rather peculiar type of music that Arcane Sun has become somewhat prominence for? How did the Irish scene react to this album back then?

I didn't hear the Arcane Sun album for a number of years later, as I moved away from Ireland just before it was released and pretty much ceased listening to metal in the interim! I only heard their 2nd unreleased CD a few months ago!

I'm not really sure of my opinion on their music now, but I do think the overall concept was brave and ambitious, but was never fully realised, in the main due to line-up problems.

In interviews back then bands had spoken about the general tendency of Irish bands to split-up rather fast and being somewhat unable to keep going. Has this changed since? Is there a tendency to keep it all a bit small and local?

This can become quite a complicated answer and in thinking about it, it can be difficult to forget how different things were back in the early to mid 90's, but in general the main problems for bands in Ireland now (and also back then to a similar degree) is a small population (equals an even smaller metal population), a not overly favourable geographical location (far edge of Europe) and being an island (difficult and expensive for bands to travel to & from). Couple this with no mainstream national media/press support/coverage and a general societal trend of "growing out of" sub-culture "phases" (such as metal is seen as) by the time you are supposed to be an adult, start a family and have a proper career!

History shows that only a few Irish underground/extreme bands manage to succeed & really, Primordial being the only ones who have managed some widespread acclaim, albeit with a considerable amount of doggedness and hard graft. Not all bands have that much stubbornness and determination!

There is however a thriving "underground" scene here with plenty of bands, labels, shops/distros and gig promoters, and more recently more co-operation/crossover between the metal and punk/hardcore scenes.

How has the scene developed over the years?

I see it from quite an outsider's point of view, as I listen to very little metal these days and therefore am not part of the scene in the same regard as I was 20 years ago. But, despite the change in times (and despite what I said in the answer above!), all the elements are pretty much the same. There are lots of bands, not many that "make it" (whatever that means these days!?). There are lots of gigs, but often too many, especially when one takes the band to fan ratio into consideration. There are lots of trends, lots of cliques, some nice people and always, some idiots. Main difference to the old days is the advent of the Internet, access to music and information and therefore, now everyone apparently needs to know everyone's opinion. I like to stay loosely informed but tend to remain somewhat aloof to it all!

Back to your band:

Considering that not many will know your band, why don't you write a bit about your music (style, sound, background ...):

Rehearsal (Demo, 1994)

Not sure what this is exactly. Was listed somewhere online, but we used to trade rehearsals back then to spread the word and there were lots of different ones in circulation. They would probably have been early incarnations of Thy Temperate Veil and two other songs that we never got recorded professionally. By mid '94, we had already moved on from the Doom/Death style and just used clean vocals, and were developing our slow, melodic and mournful style within long epic dirges...

Thy Temperate Veil / A Vanity Lost (Demo, 1995)

One song, 22 minutes or so and whilst being somewhat more influenced by traditional Doom (St. Vitus, Candlemass, Count Raven, Trouble...), we are definitely defining our own path on this recording. There is a very definite attempt I think to emphasise the heaviness of the emotion and sombreness in the music, rather than the heaviness of traditional metal distortion elements. I don't ever remember us wanting to be brutal or crushing in any metal kind of way and this recording confirms that completely.

Fragrant Suncry, A Scented Memoriam (demo / promo, 1996)

Was actually recorded in the same session as Serein Falls, but dated back as a song we wrote in the early stages of 1995. Therefore, it has a similar feel and scope as Thy Temperate Veil, albeit with a little more clarity of structure and more pronounced melody.

Serein Falls (EP, 2008)

OK, this was the changing point for the band. It was recorded in 1996 and intended for a vinyl release (to be followed by a mostly at that point unwritten debut LP). It marked a very giant step away from doom metal and even also from the use of traditional riff-based structures. The songs were very much carried by the bass and washes of drums, with the guitar and vocals floating in and around them. Altogether, it is a more relaxing and immersive affair than what came before.

It was a very conscious decision to move towards this more Ambient direction, in fact we'd been describing ourselves as Romantic Ambient Doom since 1994! We were listening to a wider range of music both individually and collectively,

especially such acts like Gong, Ship of Fools, Ozric Tentacles, Kyuss, Monster Magnet and ambient electronic sounds like Biosphere, Future Sound of London, Aphex Twin, Orbital, System 7 and The Orb amongst others. All this, combined with a smattering of melancholic Doom influence, culminated in Serein Falls. I'm really proud of this recording and think it still sounds fresh today.

Do you ever plan to rerecord, revisit or properly re-release your early material?

We self-released Serein Falls in 2008 and still sell it today. It would be nice to get a few done on vinyl some day if possible. Times are tough financially though...

The rest is of its time and should remain so.

Why did this hiatus happen? What made you restart TSB in 2007? Why not a new name ... something fresh?

We split in 1997 due to various reasons and we were then simply never in the same country at the same time again until 2007.

We did talk at this time about adapting a new name. However, we felt that the legacy of the band was unfinished and therefore decided to see it as a definite continuation and progression. In today's world it is hard enough to generate the smallest modicum of interest amongst the tumultuous amount of music out there, and to be honest if we had chosen a new name, we would probably have to point out to people that it was ex-Thy Sinister Bloom anyway!

A name is just a name in any case, the music is the change and that's all that matters.

In an interview with Metal Ireland you wrote that the current line-up is hardly comparable with the one from the early days. Have you grown a bit tired of the metal scene and tried to venture more into rather experimental realms or how would describe the aspect of the shift in style of your band?

It's exactly all of that! We did some "metal" based stuff in 2008, albeit with more experimental, drone and ambient touches, but overall it felt a bit forced, unsatisfying and in hindsight, a stupid mistake. Another hiatus arose between 2009 & 2011, in which we formulated another return and we are now in a much more relaxed space of mind. Not so much a band, but a group of dear old friends who like to play music together now and then.

What kind of music do you like to head towards? Do you have some kind of concept in the back of your head, a distinct type of music you like to create? Is it possible to name bands/albums as some kind of reference? While I was listening to your music, Pantera's interpretation of Black Sabbath's Planet Caravan came to my mind. Somewhat ethereal music that does not demand from the listener to pay attention all the time, but provides enough liberty to leave for the kitchen or some other place.

Hopefully you are going to make a nice cup of tea in the kitchen to enjoy when you return to the music!!

To be honest, we have reached a point where the listener is not really considered in the whole scheme of things. We have the need to make music, so we do. If others get to listen to it, that's good too! Although, our view of our music is that it is both relaxing and hopefully immersive. But without the privilege of hearing it through someone else's ears, we will never know!

I find it difficult to accurately and fully describe what we play currently. We have moved our traditional mournful melodies into textures of drifting, floating layers of sound. These are sound-scapes so to speak, that need to be sculpted in a studio rather than crudely performed live on stage.

And obviously, in comparison to the old doom we played, we are fully instrumental these days. This was a long deliberated decision finally taken with the confidence that we had the ability to fully develop the music without use of a voice. We all approach our individual instruments in a much more experimental fashion than before in order to explore different and unexpected sounds. Add to this the magnitude of technology available to us and the palette is endless.

There is no distinct reference points, but we are definitely informed more these days by experimental drone, kosmische electronic, electronic ambient, dark dub, various ethnic traditional music, plainsong chant & jazz, to name a few! All of these brush against what we try to create and leave minute and sparse audible residues within the layers of sound... (That's certainly the grand scheme or plan anyway!!)

Considering the focus on rather long compositions and lyrics that come over as somewhat "story"-like, it may be interesting to know on how you deal with aspects like repetition, variation and atmosphere. What would or should be characteristic for a TSB composition? Do you have certain authors, whose work can be pointed to as a major input in this regard?

In the band's earlier incarnation, the lyrics were mainly handled by the vocalist Jeff and he was immersed in recounting imaginary tales of melancholy, sadness, beauty and joy. I think his inspiration came in the main from art and painting rather than any literary source and this shows in his strange turns of phrase and sometimes invented words.

Today, with our instrumental direction, we pull influence not just from music, but from varying sources such as, literature, film, philosophy, art and history. We usually have some sort of "vision" with our tunes, so they become sort of soundtracks to imaginary films, to define it in such a crude fashion. We are currently working on a collaborative project that will result in a multi-art-media presentation hopefully later this year. However, we do not want to reveal too much detail as there are plenty of logistics to be ironed out presently.

And most definitely, repetition, subtle and gradual variation and creating an atmosphere, pretty much defines the music that I listen to and therefore, the music that we continue to strive towards.

Do you have some forthcoming releases? What are the plans for the future?

We are currently in the process of recording some new material that we hope will result in some form of official release later in the year. There are still lots of finishing touches, editing and mixing to be done and we are taking our own good time to gradually create it all!

I can reveal that it is deeply immersive and darkly layered in equal measure and in some ways quite a departure for us in that most titles are much shorter in length, and represent very specific and poignant themes, within an over-arching concept.

There is also talk of other collaborative projects within the band, to explore other music, so hopefully some of those ideas will come to fruition soon.

In case someone is interested in your music, how and where can this person buy your stuff?

The EP is available on CD through our Bandcamp page, along with free downloads of our demo and promo.

Distribution of any forthcoming material is yet to be determined.

How can people get in touch with you? What Internet sites do you use?

Contact can be made either through Bandcamp or Soundcloud (or if you're really desperate, the old Myspace if it is still alive!), where we will endeavour to keep updated with new music or information.

<http://www.thysinisterbloom.bandcamp.com/>

<http://soundcloud.com/thy-sinister-bloom>

<http://www.myspace.com/thysinisterbloom>

Good old fashioned e-mail is also an option: fragrantsuncry@googlemail.com

Some closing comments if you like

Thanks for the interest and the well thought out and in-depth interview oneyoudontknow! Was a pleasure to not to get to know you!

The process has further ignited a nostalgic thought of doing fanzine interviews in the days before the internet when we had to write out everything. Happy times, however I am glad of being able to type this one out!

Thy Sinister Bloom

(Ireland; Psychedelic Doom Metal, Ambient)

<http://thysinisterbloom.bandcamp.com/>

Thy Sinister Bloom is one of the obscure bands of the Irish metal scene. They started their endeavour in the 90s, but have not spread many releases since; despite a considerable amount of copies that have been spread of some of the earlier releases, especially when keeping the difficulties of a young band from a small scene in the back of the head. Furthermore, even though the band members had been active in the other metal bands at that time as well, the music by this band attempts to stretch the boundaries considerably. What needs a special emphasis is the aspect of the date in which these bands had seen the light of day and how they fit into the broader scheme of the scene at that time. The metal genre reached its first extreme in the mid-80s, but failed to catch on and gather momentum. Small bands of various extreme genres popped up but vanished again soon after. An existence reduced to a couple of demos and sometimes to even less. TSB fits into this as well of course.

Thy Sinister Bloom – Thy Temperate Veil-A Vanity Lost (1995)

(Psychedelic Doom Metal, Ambient)

1 Track (Tape – Self-released) - _ _ - (22:47)

When this tape had seen the light of day the Irish metal scene had a distinct focus on death as well as thrash metal. Ignoring Thin Lizzy and bands of a similar musical approach, nearly one decade passed since the first extreme output had hit the scene in this country, while Thy Sinister Bloom attempts to open a new realm already, so to speak. It is a band whose concept lacks the heaviness, aggressiveness, not to mention the clarity with which other bands would start their endeavour.

Over twenty minutes in length, with a good amount of variations and concepts "Thy Temperate Veil-A Vanity Lost" is quite a trip into psychedelic realms with additional ambient passages woven into it. The style is minimalist, repetitive and with a certain kind of melancholy now and then. It seems therefore more appropriate to use a description like psychedelic doom metal than to fall back on something simple like "doom metal".

It is a track that takes a while. Demands attention. Gives the impression of telling a story, a narrative, something obscure. Various types of vocals help to create the setting, while vague hints on melodies are given now and then. Broken up in chord structures, whose part is enwrapped by more elaborate passages. A counterpoint, despite the reluctance of the band to rely on such a concept on too large a scale: there are no extreme kinds of vocals for instance. Also the overall flow does not exceed certain limits. All is calm... nice ... gentle. Contemplation and a long one at that. Traditional doom metal put on a stretcher and filled up with drugs.

Maybe this is the main aspect of criticism of "Thy Temperate Veil-A Vanity Lost". It is not overtly metal. It lacks a good amount of heaviness, does not even try to be consistent in any meaningful way. A clear or rather recognizable structure is nowhere to be seen, which leaves the listener a bit lost somehow. One has to endure all that is going on and with little change in actually unravelling it. Be it the large amount of vocals, their strange way of expressing the texts, or the general instrumental limitation, there are a lot of things that can be criticized. Nevertheless, the laid back atmosphere as well as aspect in which this tape had seen the light of day makes it special somehow.

Thy Sinister Bloom – Fragrant Suncry, A Scented Memorium (1996)

(Psychedelic Doom Metal, Ambient)

1 Track (Tape – Self-released) - _ _ - (23:06)

Important: the first and the second output should be listened to one after the other. Through this something is revealed that could be missed otherwise: the striking similarity between these two pieces of music. Not only the dynamics, also the atmosphere, the concept and the sound are the same. It follows in accordance with "Thy Temperate Veil-A Vanity Lost". Yet, despite all that can be pointed to as "identical", the music is slightly different and has its own touch.

Clean vocals play a vital role in the first part, while the instruments are granted some spare time or room to unravel a solo part some time later. TSB play rather doom metal here, but in a minimalist and reduced kind of way. Guitars are important, due to the heaviness which they add and their counterpoint to the vocal part. Would the performance head for a darker and more sinister direction, then a term like funeral doom would not be too far off. Yes, it has a melancholic touch but it feels uplifting as well. Not all is bleak here; not all drowns in narcissistic contemplation.

In this track the psychedelic facets do not shine through too much. It is more straight-down doom metal and with the standard set. Over twenty-three minutes of slowly progressing melody structures, a considerable amount of repetition but all with a well-executed production. Yes, the balancing and the setting help to make it all a bit more palpable. Fans of obscure doom metal might want to give this release a try.

Thy Sinister Bloom – Serein Falls (2008)

(Psychedelic Rock, Ambient)

3 Tracks (CD – Self-released) - _ _ - (26:40)

This piece of music had originally been recorded in 1996, but not seen the light of day until 2008.

The three tracks on Serein Falls have each a distinct touch and style. Meander on. Post-Earth conceptions, fantasies of places far out in space, ever unreachable, ever incomprehensible, ever inducing a longing of leaving the shores of the well-known world behind. The music leaves you alone, because in direction it points away from our own spheres and towards some distant ones. Drums create a pattern, strings add melodies, the bass throws in some warm ones as well and the vocals are responsible for some atmospheric touches. Nothing feels particularly innovative or even daring; it seems to exist because it is possible for such an art to have a place in some obscure niche, whose place is readily forgotten and rarely discovered. Hardly engaging, drug induced, mysticism without a shaman.

A new direction ... but one that follows suit with the band's origin. Even though the metal parts are gone, their absence does not come over as a burden. With less heaviness the atmosphere has a considerably larger impact, whose ingredients remind on early Black Sabbath, Pink Floyd and psychedelic bands from the 70s. It is a continuation of what has been done before, but it does not feel like the band dared to push it a bit. No experimentation, no distinct counterpoints and also no keyboard elements that would play with the guitars in such a way as to lift the progressiveness to a different level. All flows ... it flows continually, as if the band had hit some kind of secret source, whose contents would enable the band to create and spread their particular type of art on a larger scale.

This their latest output is as strange and confusing as the other ones. You listen to all of them in a row, may be bewildered about the arrangements, the style and the sound, but to look beyond the immediate or obvious could be challenging indeed. Music that does not demand attention or comprehension. Strange that the Irish metal scene would be a host to such a band ... and from that early stage on.

SMILE CARVED SOUR

Why don't you start off by introducing the band a bit? When and by whom had it been started? Who would conduct this interview?

Ronny: Smile Carved Sour started around 2002 by Dag Olav and Ronny. We were, and still are, members of the thrash metal band Vesen, and the first ideas appeared on Vesen rehearsals. We rehearsal setting was Dag Olav on drums and Ronny on guitar. We've released two demos, The Sound you'll Never Hear in 2003 and Puppet Death in 2009. I'm afraid we both have to lead you through this conversation, as many moments of these 11 years have disappeared and we both have to dig deep in our minds to bring you some interesting information.

Your name really needs some kind of explanation. What is the meaning behind "Smile Carved Sour"?

Dag Olav: Well, there's not so much a deeper meaning behind it as it sets a mood or ambience that matches the music. The name itself is self-explanatory, and if you start thinking about a smile being carved sour, you've got your happy bit, your sad bit, and your right out nasty bit. Overall it kinda sums up the band's eclectic and erratic music.

Why did you start the band? What had been the initial idea so to speak and how does the music on your first demo "Sound You'll Never Hear" play into all of this? Did you already know what kind of music you wanted to play when the band was founded?

Ronny: It all just happened. We both like to jam and listen to different kinds of music. And this sort of strange jamming became a part of warming up on Vesen rehearsals, before we hammered away at full speed. Actually we both lived together in a shitty basement and found it more comfortable to spend the nights in the rehearsal room. For many hours we jammed and we were smart enough to record many of the nights. I guess we decided to form a band when we had tons of tapes with great stuff we couldn't use in Vesen. When SCS was formed we decided this was our playground and everything was allowed. No rules! With this said, we didn't form a strange band for the sake of being strange. But on the other hand we had lived with true Norwegian Black Metal scene for a decade, and were a bit tired of it all. With SCS we really felt it necessary to do something completely different.

The Metal Archives mention a well-known Norwegian band on your entry: Ved Buens Ende. According to them your music is a continuation of this band's legacy. How do you respond to this? Do you like the music of VBE?

Ronny: Oh yeah, we really like VBE and it's a big compliment being described as their successors. I really like their way to combine strange chords and they're for sure an inspiration when it comes to think and play music beyond the ordinary terms. I'm not sure if Smile Carved Sour sounds that similar as we tried out so many different things as the alto horn and some jazzier parts. I'm sure it was easy to connect us together ten years ago as not that many bands did these things. Not that the scene flows over nowadays, but fortunately a few more bands have seen the need to think a bit different musically.

Dag Olav: For me, I can see how my clean-voice singing style is somewhat similar to VBE, but other than that, I honestly don't see any similarities whatsoever. I think the comparison is a lazy one because people don't know about any alternatives. Both bands spring from the Norwegian extreme metal scene, but we're not doing the same thing at all. For me, I would have said Mr. Bungle about ten times before I would have said VBE. Ok, I can accept that other people hear something else in the music than what I do, but really... come on...

How do you see your band in the broader context of the Norwegian metal scene?

Dag Olav: Very much on the sidelines. Actually, maybe Smile isn't a metal band at all, even though it has lots of metal parts and influences. What's been interesting about Smile has been where we've found our following. It's totally unpredictable, and comes from all sorts of unexpected environments, one person here and one person there. Which is nice, I really like that.

What would be your opinion on it anyway? As you are active in it for some time already, you have seen a considerable shift of tides and styles, what kind of bands (and eras) do you prefer?

Ronny: I'll do my best not to use too many pages on this question, hehe. Concerning Smile this is a very relaxing part. Thrash metal had a revival a few years ago but still with limitations. With Vesen we've struggled hard to get record deals, book gigs and rehearsed to be a good liveact. Traditional hard rock has a boost now and with Devil I've been able to very active the last two years. I love playing music and the activities that follow, so please don't misunderstand, but Smile has been fun in a more relaxing way. It's just the two of us and we can just meet and jam and see what come out of it. Not thinking about being able to be play the material live or to please any label boss. Creativity and total freedom. Lovely! As a fan I like to follow what happens in the metal scene. I've hosted the metal radioshow High Voltage for 20 years now and it's always the same story. Mostly the pioneers, or the first copycats of the second and third generations are interesting and survive. The only thing I really can't handle are the core bands. Metalcore, deathcore or whatever they call it. Now it seems like if you find a record from 1984 it's the best that can happens. And yes, there are many great records from 1984, but not sure how many new bands we need copying any of the Mausoleum records from that year. For me 1986 is best. Reign In Blood, Eternal Devastation, Pleasure To Kill. So yes, thrash metal from the last half of the 80's win! At the moment I can't wait to hear the new Darkthrone album.

Does the song-writing for SCS come naturally or do you have to force yourself a bit? Is there a difference in the way you approach the composing of music for SCS, compared with other bands you have been or are involved in?

Ronny: As this has been our playground with no limits the riffs has been the least problem. The biggest job has been to arrange the songs and to think of a suitable concept. In other bands we have our frames, so maybe the biggest problem writing songs for SCS was to find limits in the unlimited. After all, the songs had to end sometime. I actually think it's harder to write music for other bands. Like in Vesen we push ourselves to the extreme to come up with riffs that shall kill alone, not being covered by tons of layers and noise. Some riffs in Smile is actually nothing being played alone, but meant to be a base for experimental layers.

Dag Olav: Composing for Smile is a whole different beast. Like Ronny mentioned earlier, almost all of our material comes out of jamming with guitar and drums, and everything is allowed. It becomes a big task to then go through tons of material, sort out the good bits, arrange them into something resembling songs, and then adding the elements of bass, vocals, horns, etc. Interestingly (maybe), a song on our first demo, a song called "Wreck", is pretty much untouched from start to finish, arrangement-wise. Meaning we didn't really alter anything from the original jam, which had no previously composed parts of riffs, so it ended up just like it was spontaneously conceived on the spot. Just adding horns, bass and vocals afterwards, of course.

In an interview for Nocturnalcult (see link at the end of the interview) you explain that SCS is considerably time consuming. What are the reasons for this? Has this to do with what you have achieved or rather created or with where you want to move towards?

Dag Olav: It's because of the way we work, the way we conceive and arrange the songs (see previous answer). It just takes a lot of time and focus, and nowadays, with Ronny and myself living in different parts of the country, with families and jobs, there's just not enough time to do Smile properly. I don't wanna change the formula just to accommodate that, because then some of the essence of the band would be gone, at least for ourselves. It was a lot easier to find the time when we were single flat-mates. We even worked at the same place when we did the first demo, which was a local tv station, and so the first demo is actually recorded in a tv studio.

There are two members in SCS. How does this play out? What part do each of the musicians have? And why is it kept at two musicians?

Ronny: First of all I think it's been great just being the two of us. Simply because we understand each other best. We never had any intention to become a band, and coming from a traditional band setting we loved to have the possibility to try to complete a records doing everything ourselves. Once we played with the thought of bringing SCS to the stage, and we even rehearsed with a drummer a few times. I think we got some jobs with Vesen at that time so the whole idea was put to rest for a while, or forever if you like.

Dag Olav: Ronny and I really click musically. We appreciate a lot of the same quirky stuff, we are both dedicated metalheads, and we both have a very open mind to music. Importantly, we jam really well together, and almost always come up with something usable. I have massive amounts of Smile material on old cassette tapes that would have made excellent songs. Ronny is an unconventional guitarist, a fact that I love and love to exploit. While jamming, it's sometimes as if he's just channeling excellence, and a lot of the time he's not even realizing what he's doing, let alone realizing that it's brilliant, and so it becomes my job to catch these raw outbursts, and mold them into something resembling songs. He's the bee and I'm the beekeeper, and together we make and process honey. Put a guitar in that man's hands, and he'll come up with some seriously quirky and somehow catchy shit, which in turn triggers millions of ideas with me, and off we go. We're both there in the jams and influence each other, I've got my input as well, but surely Smile wouldn't be the same thing without Ronny's twisted instincts. After the jams, I piece it roughly into songs, and then we rehearse them together, brush them off and make the transitions work. I arrange the details and do the lyrics, vocals and horns, and we both have ideas for bass lines, but Ronny is the main guy on all things with strings. Finally, I work with effects and put the finishing touches on the songs.

What are the core essences of your music? Do you feel you have reached a level already that can be described as characteristic for your band?

Dag Olav: I definitely feel that we've hit on something, and that we have our own sound. It's difficult for me to pinpoint exactly what that is in the end-result, but what I can say is that the ingredients we put into it, with our open-mindedness, the jam-based approach, Ronny's quirky guitar-play, my slightly unusual musical reference points, our willingness to play and explore, and to let things just play themselves out rather than always plan and cramp things into a frame... They all come together and forge something that is nothing else but Smile Carved Sour.

"A Sound You'll Never Hear" is the title of your first release as well as a bold statement. Is such a sound not rather negligible? We will never hear the explosion of a sun or noises from the grinding of matter beyond the event horizon of a Black Hole. Can you shed some light on this phrase?

Dag Olav: "A sound you'll never hear", yes. Well, it's been a while since I wrote that lyric "Enemies...", but I remember it as an attack on the mindset of some people, who have no interest in music evolving or for bands to be taking any chances. There are too many protectionists in the metal scene, and when too many of the scene's "leaders", who like and benefit from the status quo, push their ideas on the impressionable young and upcoming artists, and impose that things must be done so and so, it kinda quenches development. I too appreciate old school metal, and our other band Vesen works very well within the rules and limitations that we choose to take from our genre, but it has gone too far when young talent is guided into copying these old guys' heroes rather than coming up with something new and fresh, and I guess that Smile, being one of the bands that does step away from the norm, is some of the sound that you actually did

get to hear, and so “the sound you’ll never hear” is then of course all the music that will never be made because of all that ultra-conservative mentality. If that makes sense, haha.

What struck me about your first demo was the level of rawness of the music. How does this aspect fit into the broader context of a new conceptual direction? Both releases have this rehearsal room touch.

Dag Olav: Yeah, we’ve done it all ourselves, and both demos have in fact been recorded in our rehearsal rooms. Taking a big and time-consuming project like Smile into a proper studio would have cost us all our money and then some. We need to have a lot of time with this, so we did it ourselves, and the production was what ended up suffering, because we didn’t know enough about the technicalities of recording to get a proper end result. We got some help from capable friends, but all in all, we did both demos by ourselves, and yeah... if there’s something I regret, it’s that the music never really fulfilled it’s potential with a proper production. The way it is now, I look at the releases more as statements of intent, rather than complete products.

Why do you use an alto horn? A saxophone has found its way already on a Carpathian Forest album for instance, but a horn is quite a rare instrument. What does it add to the music that another instrument is not able to?

Ronny: We had an alto horn, that’s why we used it. I can’t recall the actual reason why we decided to use it, as you say it’s quite rare and not the first thing you bring when you shall record an album. I think it gave the releases a deeper meaning than just being a strange metal CD. It wasn’t represented through the whole cd, and that made the hot sauce extra spicy where needed and our goal to do something beyond the ordinary had succeed.

Is there a chance to hear some other ones on a future album?

Ronny: If we’ll do more records we’ll of course bring elements from the previous releases, and the horn will be essential. If you mean other instruments, it wouldn’t be impossible I guess. If you mean a complete brass band or a machine making electronic noise we’re open for ‘em all!

Do you think that the black metal genre should experiment more with instrumentations?

Ronny: Not necessary. Simple old school black metal is great. I wouldn’t love Darkthrone more if they added a harp so to speak. Taakes addition of banjo on their last album was amazing. I like straight forward metal and I like experimental stuff, but it all have to be a natural part of the band and their songwriting. Of course there are moments you think you hear half versions and wish there could been more in the songs. But it wouldn’t necessary help if the band did some experiments just for experiments’ sake.

Why don’t you present the music with a larger booklet and such? Has this to do with the fact that you distribute the music yourself? Do you ever plan to spread it on a more professional basis? What is “macprod” by the way?

Ronny: Both releases were demos, and I’m not sure how we planned the promotion. I know we sent them to magazines and some labels, but honestly I don’t remember what feedback we expected. No labels were interested, and the Puppet Death demo was released by macprod, or Machinery Productions. It was run by previous Vesen, and now Lobotomized bassplayer David Lie. On this label he released demos of his friends on CDR and mainly gave them away for free. True underground! Puppet Death was released almost 5 years after it was recorded.

The cover artwork of “A Sound You’ll Never Near” is somewhat curious. Both band members play in a precinct, while the only other people around them are three rather disinterested kids. Is this a likely scenario that you “perform” your music in such a way? And is this rather desolate situation a rather humorous take on you see yourself in terms of music and society?

Dag Olav: Yeah, I think it’s a good image on how the world would appreciate music like ours, haha. I think your last sentence there was spot on.

Your second release has been “Puppet Death” and the name opens some realm of speculation: a puppet can be seen as a fetish and its death robs people of an ability to sublimate their desires and emotions. Why is this “death” important for you?

Dag Olav: Well, in this setting, it’s really only important within the concept of those songs. I like your speculation there, I like it when listeners can add their own input, rather than the artist laying out a defined answer. It can be lots of things.

But is the death of the puppet not an utopia? In the rural community you face the intellectual anaemia of the centuries, while in the town the immediateness of time and space renders such shocks (through theatre) meaningless, throws this idea into the mainstream and presents it as today’s latest kick, which feels already outdated on the following morning. Do you feel that people are still willing to challenge truths today? You talked about this in the interview for Nocturnalcult. Is today’s world not an “information overkill hell”? A place in which every person is bombarded with trivia, gossip and information on such a scale that it is difficult to really look behind the veil in front of one’s eyes?

Dag Olav: Definitely. A lot of people challenge the truths, but really, every person needs to do that. We’re in a dangerous place when people just accept somebody else’s package of truths. Here in Norway, when I was a kid in school, we actually had an own subject called Christianity. They taught us that shit as truths in school! I think that basic philosophy should be taught to all children, and that they should be given the tools to question the world around them, and reason their way to their own answers. Every person’s answer to the big questions in life are too important to be outsourced.

Can you lay out the basic concept behind "Puppet Death"?

Dag Olav: Sure, it's based on the remaining bits of recordings from our rural Eastern European puppet show tour back in the 50's. Through Elmer the Puppet, the audience is handed some difficult philosophical questions that they need to answer for themselves. The most important issue is that of life and death, as we follow Elmer through multiple suicides and consequent resurrections, most of them caused by the interaction with that same audience. The interesting bits of it are really the audience reactions and the continuous interaction between audience and puppet show.

The centrepiece of your second release is a track called "Bach is Dead". Can you write a bit about it, the original composer of it and it fits among the other compositions?

Dag Olav: Well, this is a song by The Residents, off their fantastic Duck Stab album (which, by the way, was recorded entirely on toy instruments). The Residents is a massive influence on me, maybe not so much the music in itself as their approach to music. For anyone not familiar with them, they're one of the most outrageous bands ever, highly experimental, mystical and quirky. The lyrics of "Bach Is Dead" just fit very well in with the story of Elmer, and I always felt that song could be done well with a more metal approach, so there you go.

Would you mind writing a bit about some other projects you are involved in: Devil, Hellish Orkestra, Vesen & Lobotomized. What is their current status and what kind of music do or did they play?

Ronny: Except for Hellish Orkestra all these bands are active. Vesen is still our main band. We released our fourth album This Time It's Personal in August through Soulseller Records. Our music is black/thrash metal. The ugliness of Carpathian Forest meets the heaviness and melodies of Testament! I play drums in Devil, a traditional doomy hardrock band combining Black Sabbath and NWOBHM. Our second album Gather The Sinners is now out through Soulseller records (if the interview is published after March 22nd). Lobotomized is finally about to release their debut album Norwegian Trash. The title says it all. Think Autopsy with the spirit of Shane McGowan. I'm not quite sure who knows who's in the band at the moment, but Dag Olav plays drums on this album. Hellish Orkestra was a fast death metal band with me and the former drummer of Dødheimsgard. We only released three songs, the Murder demo in 2003.

Dag Olav: Yeah, I'm not in Lobo anymore, but I play drums on MOST of the tracks on the album. It's sort of a last hurrah for me with Lobo, and even though I quit the band earlier, I wanted to follow through with the songs that I was a part of developing during my time with the band, so I'm playing drums on those songs myself. Ola, their new drummer, plays on a couple of songs that they wrote after my departure, and I think they even got Kris from Lydia Laska on one song, but I'm not sure. That album is one big soup of musicians and guest musicians, so you'd have to ask them.

Do you have some forthcoming releases? What are the plans for the future? In an interview you mentioned that the songs have been written but still wait to be recorded.

Ronny: There are a few songs, and I guess there still are some listenable ideas on the already mentioned tapes. At the moment there are no particular plans to record anything. But I think it would be nice to hear a few of the older songs with better production. Vesen is also more experimental now than ten years ago, so actually we're able to use some ideas there as well. So the need to rush in a studio to do more SCS isn't that important at the moment.

In case someone is interested in your music, how and where can this person buy your stuff?

Ronny: Both CD's are available at www.unbornproductions.com. Here you also can find releases with all our bands.

How can people get in touch with you? What Internet sites do you use?

We both run Vesens facebooksite. As SCS don't have any website search for Vesen or our names on Facebook. Or mail ronnyostli@gmail.com or dagolavh@gmail.com

Some closing comments if you like

Ronny: Thank you very much for your interest in Smile Carved Sour. Please note that if we answer "was" and "no current activities" we've never split up the band, so who knows?

(additional insights: <http://www.nocturnalcult.com/Smilecarvedsourint.htm>)

Smile Carved Sour – Sound You'll Never Hear (2003)

(Norway; Avant-garde Black Metal)

9 Tracks (CD – Self-released) -_- (54:46)

<http://www.myspace.com/smilecarvedsour>

The title of the release has a certain amount of daringness in it. It presupposes the idea of an oxymoron, an existing non-existence. But here I am, sitting in front my computer, enduring the confusing contrasts, the distracting melodies, the overall impertinence of two Norwegian musicians. Yes, Norway again. The home of strange bands like Solefald, Ved Buens Ende, Ihsahn and whatnot. Even though the trend of black metal has calmed down a bit, especially in respect to this Scandinavian country, it is still possible to see some obscure band washed on the shores of the metal scene, whose concept is a new take on an actually rather narrow conception. A "Sound You'll Never Hear" is anything but pleasant, it is raw, it is demanding as well as a welcome contrast to all the polished stuff that floods the airwaves.

Leaving physical limitations aside, humans are generally able to enjoy the performance of this band in one way or another. Whether they are pleased by what they are presented with is another question. SCS are different, even though the basic rhythm models follow well known patterns. They head into a different direction, break with what can be described as ordinary and this has not so much to do with some rambling about the "mother's kitchen floor" – a parody of the basement black metal? – as with the confusing to and fro on this album. It is Darkthrone reinterpreted, the old-school black metal re-arranged and underground concepts put upside down. How wonderful would it be to have some actual lyrics at hand, to look for some potential schizophrenia, to dive deep into these obscure realms that are opened by the band without any difficulty it seems. Yet, we the audience have to sit tight and listen to the performance of this band; something that is so amply presented on the cover artwork. L'art pour l'art.

The setting of the music is actually quite conservative. No keyboards, synths and similar elements have found their way into the compositions. Very basic in its premise, but executed with a strange versatility. Solefald meets Darkthrone meets In the woods..., but on a level that is difficult to actual grab. It lacks a bit of insanity or maybe a certain conceptual unconventionality, it does not have the consistent aggressiveness and it also does not have these extreme vocals, these extreme differences in the approaches. Yet it is a bit of it all.

Death of the Creators, and this might be a bit misleading, opens the album in such a way as to attempt to set the stage for some kind of old-school black metal. The riffs, the abrasive sound of the guitars and this "middle-finger" attitude point in this direction. A first disturbing element would be the lyrics – "on my mother's kitchen floor"; repeated several times. One short and rather disturbing interlude later, SCS continue with their particular type of music. Or do they? Well, it is up to the track "Enemies of the Sound You'll Never Hear" to push the music in a surprising direction. Those who happen to be familiar with the debut album of the band Naervaer might acknowledge the impact that a trumpet can have on a composition. Here the effect is the same. The alto horn (!) helps to set a contrast to the noisy and raw sound of the guitars; something the vocals, despite an emphasis on clean nature, are unable to. Sadly, this instrument plays only a marginal role. Is only allowed to appear on some rare occasions. It is actually also the only facet, whose part is allowed to break out of the general spirit and flow. Similar to Carpathian Forest's experiment with a saxophone, also here the roles are basically set and carved in stone.

Also marginalized is the use of samples. A rather short one is allowed to make an appearance in the last composition. Judging from the sound it could have been taken from a horror movie or some other flick. Another element that has to be brought up has to do with the manipulation of the voice. "Wreck", the longest track on this release, offers something that reminds on Ulver; "Themes from William Blake's The Marriage of Heaven and Hell" and later. Both elements are some kind of contrast to the general direction and come as a surprise.

Are these all the references that can be brought up? Has this band been placed in a somewhat proper place? Hardly. It is easy to mention other projects, give hints towards other directions, to more recent outputs, whose progressive nature makes them stand out amongst the ordinary and tiring quality in the black metal genre. With a descriptor like "Avant-garde Black Metal" all and nothing is being said at the same time. It lures the listener into some kind of uncertain certainty that a peculiar type of art would create something new, fresh and previously unknown. Well, SCS move towards a new direction but do this from a rather safe position. They do not break with their origins; do not reinvent the black metal genre anew. Instead, they have rearranged and merged parts together that few bands like to do on such levels. A strange release, definitely, but really recommended to those who prefer extreme metal with a twist.

Smile Carved Sour – Puppet Death (2009)

(Norway; Avant-garde Black Metal)

7 Tracks (CD – Macprod) -_- (37:19)

<http://www.myspace.com/smilecarvedsour>

Six years (!) after their first demo "Sound You'll Never Hear", the band presents a second one and one that breaks in style as well as concept considerably with the debut output. Not only the sound has taken a leap towards a more a balanced realm, the entire concept has lost a lot of teeth. Despite a certain emphasis on black metal elements, these have been watered down considerably. It is the aspect of the avant-garde that plays a more prominent role in the seven compositions from now on. The basic foundation has shifted away, bereft the music of some of its extreme facets; its intensity and aggressiveness. Sparks, bursts and vague fragments of the direction once presented on the debut demo "Sound You'll Never Hear" pop-up now and then. Emperor's Prometheus with even less guitars and more daring, Solefald in its more schizophrenic moments and In the woods...'s discography merged somehow. SCS are nothing definite and never something conclusive. SCS want the listener to be amazed on how easy it all can be fused together.

Let us call it "black rock with metal and avant-garde elements" for a moment. Elmer the Puppet (missing song, "Puppets'R'Us"), the second track on this demo release and a composition of 13:41 minutes, helps to set the stage in a wonderful way. Those who might be annoyed by the to and fro, the odd juxtaposition of contrasts, the large impact of the alto horn might want to stop here altogether. Motives show hints of brass orchestras; the intensity of the metal genre is only allowed to shine through on rare occasions, while the overall direction appears to be incomprehensible. And how could it be? The Norwegians hardly follow something like a red line, rarely fall down to the level of conventionality. Judging from the sound it seems like they wanted to express an imperative, to create something out of the fascination for the outré and with a certain demand on the side of the listener. Unlike Morgul and their experiments with a violin, the black metal of SCS has seen a more drastic shift, has vanished nearly entirely on this recording, has left to make room for a variety of facets, other rhythmic structures and influences.

Yes, it is nice to see the music take some pace now and then. Yes, it is nice to listen to some tremolo-picking with the sound of an alto horn on top of it. Considering that these moments are rather an exception than the rule, the rest does not give the impression of being unfinished or bereft of some sound, style or element. It is as it is. Punkish, extravagant, noisy, raw. Still, there is nothing too polished here. Even though it lacks a bit of the rehearsal room atmosphere of the debut release, it is nevertheless able to contain some of the spirit of these days. At least a bit has remained the way it is. Somehow it feels fresh and by no means dated. All fits together in an absurd kind of way and once the listener has reached the point of "Bach is dead", this loony piece of a bit more than a minute, one has to acknowledge that it holds together in a coherent kind of way. This centrepiece of the demo, this cover version of a track, whose original belongs to the absurd band "The Residents", give the impression of heading in a different direction, while remaining on the same spot at the same time. Maybe it should be debated whether this is a peak of some sort or rather a plunge into the depths of musical madness. "Puppet Death (missing song, unknown title..)" is also not much different in this regard; first something that reminds on the purring of a cat, which then changes towards some kind of distorted voice.

Especially the vocal part is strange or has a strange touch. Screams play only a minor role, while a clean singing voice expresses all what needs to be said; no matter how absurd it may sound at times. As with other elements in the concept of this band, it is a juxtaposition of contrasts that together create a harmony, whose final outcome impresses in its overall easiness. Even the post-metal and rather rockish, not to mention quite catchy, last composition "Retro Puppet" feels like it simply had to be there. Simply had to be there in this peculiar kind of way. What might come as a surprise is a slight air of melancholy, which hangs around the music at this point. Like we should pity the loss, pity what had been consumed by the ages, the years and the decades.

Puppet Death is a mocking piece of music. It is mocking because it breaks with what a neutral and unexpected listener might have in mind when this person approached this piece of art. Furthermore, the aspect of death, this overall fixation in the metal scene with this facet of life, is ridiculed in this rather impossible act of dying; at least from a physical/biological point of view. Psychologically speaking the matter is more difficult of course. The fetish is destroyed and the sexual libido is freed, only to search for something else to attach itself to. Children have a different view on this matter and see in these artificial artefacts some kind of person to play with and to fantasize about. Through maturity they grow out of this state of infantilism and towards a mature educated person; at least theoretically. In rural cultures the play of puppets is also used to express and to transfer some kind of knowledge either intra- or intergenerational. The death marks in each of these cases a clear break, while the energy contained in the puppets therein, is freed and let loose; either on the individual or on society as a whole. Examples can easily be imagined.

How much of this is an actual part of SCS' music is not revealed easily. With no lyrics at hand and with only a vague explanation on the actual background of this piece of music, the listener is left in a position of speculation and vagueness. Nevertheless, the quality of the song-writing, the odd setting and the well-crafted atmosphere are of such a kind as to keep up the interest. Puppet Death is by no means conventional in any meaningful respect. It is not mainstream ... it lingers around in the outer boundaries of the metal scene and dares the listener to explore it; to dive into this strange world of puppets, of mysticism and contrasts.

ARCTIC SPIRIT

Why don't you start off by introducing the band a bit? When and by whom had it been started? Who would conduct this interview?

I started in 2003 with our bass player Malik initially with no band name. In early 2004 my little brother Aalut started to play the drums, and Inuuteq on guitar.

In the year 2010 we got a new singer, when we were recording our second recording.

Greenland is a place not many might associate with a metal band. Can you lay out the music scene a bit. What types flourish around there and how do you, the band Arctic Spirits, fit into this?

You can feel that the music world is evolving like in all other countries. Concerts, releases of CDs, and sound engineers gets better and better. However, the rock is still the dominant music genre in the country, some of which make it difficult for us Arctic Spirits to compete with them, and because we live in such small society.

Did you have some kind of musical education? Are there attempts to preserve the cultural heritage in Greenland and are the people therefore encouraged to do their part in this respect?

In public schools, and various local community centers and other schools, there are unskilled music teachers who teach music. So, no, I'm not formally trained in music.

Let us talk about your band, then:

While your band name is in English, the titles of your albums are all in Greenlandic. Is there any special reason behind this?

The name of our band is in English, this is perhaps because we hope to be more 'visible' in other countries, while the lyrics are in Greenlandic to better express our message. We have learned from the Europeans that the Greenlandic language is very suitable for hard rock.

Would you mind to write a bit about the early days of your band? How did it all began?

In my younger days I listened to heavy metal a lot, which made me want to try to play that way. It was not possible to find people who could play in this genre among the 1000 inhabitants home town.

In 2002 I went to school in Denmark, and had written a lot of songs, even though I knew that I was not able to find musicians that I could play with.

But when I came back the following year to Qeqertarsuaq, my cousin Malik learned to play the bass, and we began to record demos together, and Malik was well underway, to evolve.

In early 2004, I worked in a bakery when I bought drums for my little brother Aalut, he began to exercise on them every day and was really good, he was then allowed to record demos with us. My new teammates had a friend who had already become a pretty good guitarist, he was also allowed to come and play with us at a later time as a guitarist.

We recorded our first album in 2008, which was a little more like a kind of a 'test' for us, "Pissutsit" was released in 2009.

According to your biography Arctic Spirits date back to 2003. What happened over all these years since your first release "Pissutsit" (Circumstances) saw the light of day in 2009? Had it been difficult to write the first songs and get them recorded?

Since we started in 2003 we lived in our home town Qeqertarsuaq, and did not have a real studio where we could record our music. We felt that if we were to do it properly, we should do it in the Greenland capital, Nuuk. Although it was a good recording studio, our limited experience in music, our songs, texts and our way of playing was "childish".

This was no wonder of course, since my fellow players were only around 18-19 years at the time.

It was pretty easy for me then having to write texts with my "young mind", but I think the reason we got the green light to record was because we had a different way of playing music than any others.

You also wrote that the band members lived in different areas of Greenland. So how did you deal with this aspect? Did each of them worked on their part alone, which were then at some point merged together or how did you deal with this? Does the band have some sort of a band leader or is it all some kind of democratic thing?

It can be quite difficult to have to work together when you do not live in the same city, so we used the Internet a lot to send each other songs that were practiced.

In the case of the very expensive transport rates in Greenland, we have been exposed to have no options just to meet and rehearse together despite the fact that we otherwise had a great need for it.

As a songwriter in the band, I put great demands on the others, which might have resulted in my taking the "leadership role", but it's probably just a characteristic of any songwriter.

In your biography you wrote:

Juuna A. Zethsen received the Danish KODA award "Talent of the Year" in 2010 for the first release of Arctic Spirits.

Can you give us some insights into this? What is this award about?

KODA's talent award which is also called "Talent of the Year" is an award which is awarded each year to a "rising star".

Why did and do you play heavy metal at all? What makes this genre stand out among the other facets of the metal music? What about death, thrash or black metal?

80s heavy metal still is very important for my way to write / create songs, but also those you mention are also important, which means that my way of making music is mixed.

What bands played a role in this respect? Do you have some favourites?

As I said, 80s heavy metal, but also other genres has made much impression on me, such as: Yngwie J. Malmsteen, who I have always looked up to, and if I even get the opportunity I could easily go down on my knees, to kiss his feet no matter how much they stink! : D

How did the band members meet each other? Is there some kind of tiny metal scene in Greenland?

Unfortunately there is no metal scene here in Greenland. Very rarely do we get the opportunity to play in regular festivals where we meet as a group.

Is there ever a chance that you merge your Western oriented heavy metal style with your own musical cultural traditions? Do you think such is actually feasible?

Yes, Indeed! But if I were to do it I could not use the music that matters to me.

This may be a vague shot, but how would you describe the differences between your traditional music and folk music from other parts of the world?

As previously mentioned, the Greenland musicians evolved greatly, and can be compared with the other musicians from around the world. But as I said, the Greenlanders' way to play rock is very different.

What kind of music is dominant on Greenland? Do you have some famous bands? How often do concerts take place?

I believe that the "Greenland rock" is the most popular music genre in Greenland, and I can't name a band which is my favorite, because there are so many good ones. This means that there are plenty of concerts where we sometimes do not know which concert we should attend, when there are several to choose from at the same time.

Your latest output "Iluliarsuit Akornanni" (Between the Icebergs) has also some elements from the hard rock scene in it, which creates a certain calm counterpoint to the metal parts. Is your music extreme by the standards of your cultural environment? What feedback do you receive from people in your current place Nuuk or your home towns.

My way to write songs / making music, might be a little too new and too strong compared to the "traditional" and "preferred" Greenlandic way of making music. As an example, I can mention two young guys recently started a satirical program on KNR (local TV) and the reaction to was great, also in the news there were much mention, however it was not so much positive publicity. It was new, and the Greenland audience is too sensitive yet. But fortunately, we have not experienced it as a group.

What are the differences between "Pissutsit" (Circumstances) and "Iluliarsuit Akornanni" (Between the Icebergs)?

"Pissutsit" was a kind of "test", we were very young and inexperienced. You can feel it in the music and the lyrics.

"Iluliarsuit Akornanni" is a little better organized, and the lyrics meant something more. Despite this, the music could be better, this also applies to recording. The difference between the 2 CDs is that I'm the lead singer of the first release, but another one is the lead singer on the next CD.

In your own words, what are the core elements of your music? How would you describe the sound and style of Arctic Spirits?

The most important part was that I was going to have fun, if you think about it, I myself believe that I have done pretty well. As for the lyrics, I hope that everyone would understand what they are really about. That is why I got them translated by a good friend.

Do you feel satisfied with your current concept or do you try to push it a bit more. Is there a definite sound or style in your mind, which you would like to create at some point in the future?

Of course I would like to continue my music career and develop myself more and do some more music in the future. But CD sales put an end to us who wants to do something new, partly because it doesn't really pay, and we can't afford it.

It seems natural that you would use your native tongue for the lyrics, but it is a nice service that you offer them in English as well. Do you want to enable people from abroad to understand what you are singing about? What do your texts actually deal with?

Yes, I really want most of the world to understand my lyrics. The text is mainly about the Greenlandic way of life / lifestyle now and then. But if you want to understand them correctly, you have to listen to the music.

Did you learn English in school or are you self-taught?

We learn English in school, but I remember that I wasn't really interested in other languages. But when I went to school in Denmark, the mindset toward language became different, and I learned only at this time to talk other languages, but my English is still very limited.

Languages tend to have a special sound and vibe. Greenlandic sounds rather calm and melodic. How do you feel about this difference? Do you record music in English as well? And what about the differences between Greenlandic and Danish?

The reason I write songs in Greenlandic, is because I want my fellow countrymen to understand them, and make an impression on them. But as mentioned before, the Greenlandic people are not yet ready to understand the hard music genre. Therefore, in the future I would like to try to write lyrics in English.

The Greenlandic language and the Danish language is very different and can't be compared with each other.

Some words on the recording processes:

How long did it take you to get the albums done? In the booklet of your "Iluliarsuit Akornanni" (Between the Icebergs) CD you thank some persons for lending you some instruments. I can imagine that it is quite expensive to buy stuff there, because all has to be imported. You have to be a bit careful when you handle these instruments, or?

"Iluliarsuit Akornanni" was made in a year, and we had to borrow musical instruments and rented a room. But during the recording all the instruments were mine, but we had to borrow guitar amplifiers from others.

Did some musicians help out in the process of recording and mixing the music?

Gedion Andersen, was a great help in the mix, as he has several years of experience in the field.

As your band exists for some years already it might be interesting to know whether you received some feedback from abroad. Are you in touch with metal fans from other places of the world? How have the responses on your art been?

I have not been directly contacted at venues yet, but private persons from other countries on Facebook and mail contacted me, and would have liked to get us there. I would more than happy if we could get the opportunity to do so again :)

Some more general questions:**A dish someone should try when visiting Greenland?**

I've noticed when tourists come to Greenland, they want to try Greenlandic food, such as: mattak (whale skin), seal meat soup and whale meat. Since I am a meat-eater, I would recommend it to them :)

Your favourite booze?

All drinks containing alcohol I like.

Why should someone visit your country and what would be the best time to do so?

Greenland has a beautiful landscape. And I think clearly if you want to see the country you must experience both summer and winter.

In winter you can go dog sledding in Northern Greenland and East Greenland. In summer you can enjoy the green landscapes, beautiful and different mountains / hills, and take cruises and do whale watching.

Do you have some forthcoming releases? What are the plans for the future?

I have quietly started to write and create new songs, but I can't say with certainty when they will be published.

In case someone is interested in your music, how and where can this person buy your stuff?

Our music can be purchased on iTunes.

How can people get in touch with you? What Internet sites do you use?

All who are interested in Arctic Spirits can follow and contact us on our Facebook page.

Some closing comments if you like

I sincerely hope that this interview may attract attention, and that more people will become interested in Arctic Spirits. And thank you for this opportunity.

Arctic Spirits – Iluliarsuit Akornanni (2012)

(Greenland; Heavy Metal/Hard Rock)

11 Tracks (Digipack – Atlantic Music) -_-_- (46:01)

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Arctic-Spirits/288519341180637>, <http://atlanticmusicshop.gl/>

Heavy metal and Greenland, this sounds like a winning team. You can fight polar bears, walruses, wale, muskox and whatnot. At least posing with a sword or an axe would make a lot of sense up there. It is definitely much more impressive than what can be done in more "southern" European parts like France and Germany. Whether it is proper to run around similarly to the acting in the video clips done by Immortal, swinging some kind of weaponry and heading for some kind of game, seems to be nothing more than a living of an infantile dream ... like it is common once the imagination runs a bit wild. Luckily, Arctic Spirits do not deal with such rather mystified topics. Their lyrics are grounded in reality and deal with their surrounding socio-cultural environment. Maybe another band from these icy plains will take up the more extreme topics in the future and create lyrics without any logical/historical basis whatsoever.

Those who happen to have a certain fancy for exploring traditional music from the multitude of cultures from around the globe might have stumbled over the peculiar way in which Greenland Inuit perform their art. UbuWeb (<http://www.ubu.com/sound/inuit.html>) can be referred to as a source of inspiration in this regard. Björk also used musicians from Greenland for her music several years ago, but the review seems to wander off a bit. The topic here is Arctic Spirit and their way of approaching the metal scene. Not surprisingly is the focus on traditional metal elements, while modern or progressive ones are neglected. Similar approaches can be identified in other genres and regions as well; especially those who happen to be rather young and containing few bands; take a look at the African continent for instance ... especially the sub-Saharan part.

An astounding characteristic of this release is the production. Why? Well, the way it had been executed is definitely noteworthy. The instruments have a lot of power, all is well balanced and also the sound is quite good. Somehow amazing what can be crafted in the northern parts of the globe. This level of professionalism really helps, because through this the band is able to get enough punch in their mixture of heavy metal and hard rock. Which of these two genres would be the dominant one is somewhat hard to say, but the latter one cannot be neglected in its impact. The musicians do not celebrate an 80s-heavy metal revival with a Greenland touch, their music is rather calm at times, comes with some ballads and attempts to present a comparatively broad approach. It would not astound to hear some of the stuff on mainstream radio around here.

Aside from this issue another one that is definitely noteworthy, would be the language. Yes, instead of heading into a direction a lot of bands from small countries tend to do, this one from far up in the north of the planet stick to their own very peculiar tongue. And it works. It adds a nice and charming touch to the performance. Judging from the sound it seems to be a rather warm and melodic language, which flows along nicely. In case someone is interested in what Arctic Spirit's music actually deals with, the booklet has the lyrics in both languages. Something not many bands tend to offer.

It is difficult to talk about a clear focus, because this tends to shift a bit now and then. Of course the vocals are a focal point, but the rest is equally important. The basis is exceedingly catchy rhythms, really cool solo parts, whose facets are allowed to unfold their potential and atmosphere. Contrary to what other young bands tend to do, Arctic Spirit is able to balance the elements out in a convincing kind of way. This album is anything but a fast shot. Thought and work went into it. Most of the compositions offer less than five minutes length and this prevents the band from adding too much filler material. Iluliarsuit Akomanni offers basic stuff with a few welcome sparks from keyboards. Hints into the realm of progressive rock are also allowed to make an appearance though.

With a certain refusal to really push it in terms in the tempo, this second album is considerably calm, melodic and atmospheric. It is feel good music without any chance of understanding it; really ... ask yourself: how many people do you know that speak the language of the Inuit? Exactly, the chances are rather slim in this regard. Bursts of faster metal appear in some rare cases and even though their arrangements leave little to desire, the band does not feel comfortable in this region of the metal music. Kalunnerit and Itillipput are two examples for tracks with a certain amount of aggressiveness and speed.

The music is heavily influenced by the 80s. Just search for some videos on Youtube and you get the idea of some core elements of the sound. Name dropping seems to be a bit pointless in this regard, because what good would come of a reference to Judas Priest? If you are into this stuff, then this young band from the Polar Regions might be something for you. Even if this type of metal does not correspond with one's preferences this band is highly recommended and should definitely receive some additional support. Well crafted, well arranged, well produced and really enjoyable. Get this release ... you really should.

Interview section

PESTA PORCINA

Pesta Porcina is a rather peculiar name. Can you write a bit about the background and your reasons for picking it?

Pesta Porcina is a pig illness. In our country there are many pork industry so this is important for us. We hope that this pig illness pass to humans and exterminate this fucking race.

What about the music that you play? From your perspective: how would you describe it and what are possible references in style and concept?

Pep Bendit,: We play gore grind, that's all. All members like a different kinds of music, but we play all together to make gore grind, to enjoy and have fun.

Jofre Dalmau: The concept in Pesta Porcina was taken from the catalan folcklore. It's mixed with a high dose of funny and gore lyrics.

How would be the members of the band and what is their role in it?

P.B.: We are basically friends. There are some times that one is more motivated and drags us for training and playing, but normally we meet, talk, write songs and have fun. We work as a team.

J.D.: Yeah, of course usually one of us came with an idea and then we work together over it. Sometimes, Albert Ll. (our singer) just came to our training room to brake our lecterns.

Some of them are also involved in side-projects. What are these and conceptually, how they differ from Pesta Porcina?

P.B./J.D.: All members are involved in other bands:

Albert Llobarro sings also with Tibosity, a gore groovy fat'n roll project and also have some crazy gore grind projects. In the past he sang with bands like RASH (Death metal) and CONFINED (Brutal death)

Jofre Dalmau has a gore grind project with his 10 year son called AIXADA PURULENTA. In the past he plays in other bands like JIGSORE (Death Metal), MY THRUSTING CROWN (Black/Doomy death metal), OBLIVION CLOUDS (Doom metal), NARKOSIS (Grindcore).

Carles Malson has not any other band (for the moment...), but in the past plays also with JIGSORE, OBLIVION CLOUDS, GERVY METAL BAND (Heavy metal covers) and RAMENCES (Punk-Rock).

Pep Bendit plays with a crust/black band called Woses and also with Tibosity and sings with a gore grind band called Depecho Mode. In the past was also involved in JIGSORE, and GERVY METAL BAND.

Ricard Ramiro plays actually with Starved, a thrash metal band from Barcelona and also with Kabal, a death metal band from Torelló. He also played in GERVY METAL BAND

How does your band fit into the broader framework of the Spanish music scene? Are you part of a certain niche of projects that stick to such extreme kinds of music?

P.B.: There are not so much gore grind bands in Spain, and not so much people that like this music. As a band and as fans we meet with people around Spain and we change music, shows, beers and more. I don't think that exist a Spanish music scene. There is some people that are working for release the extreme music in Spain and that's ok, but we are far from other countries like Chech Rep., Germany, etc I suppose we are part of this bands but it doesn't caught our attention.

What is the status of grindcore (and associated genres) in Spain anyway? How has this changed over the years?

P.B.: Grindcore is always for minorities. In Spain, like other places, grindcore is a minority style but there are a lot of great bands and a lot of old great bands. Since Denak or Haemorrhage or El Kaso Urkijo at the beginning of 90, there had been fucking great bands: Nashgul, Looking For An Answer, Difenacum, Tu Carne, Disturbance Project, Ras... The problem is that there is no so much people that support the bands, and the major part of the records and shows are organized by 4 persons.

Nowadays I have noticed that there is more people and younger people to extreme shows in Barcelona area.

Can you write a bit about your releases? What kind of music do you play on each of them, how do they differ from each other and what does the title refer to in English?

J.D.: Well, we play just goregrind. We don't want to be brutal or technique or melodic. We play for fun!

Pesta Porcina (Single – 2003)

This is really shitty stuff man, in the beginning Pesta Porcina was only a project with Albert an me, an we meet sometimes at home and we decide to record to tracks on mi PC with programmed drums. This one helps us to find our first show and we decide to be a band.

Promo '07 (Demo – 2007)

The promo was released in the same recording sessions of our first MCD 'Tots trempant'. Maybe the best songs we play live actually.

Tots Trempant (Full-length – 2008)

This is not a full-length for us. We enter to studio to record a demo, but the final result was really cool!. Few weeks later we release some tracks as a Promo (Promo'07) Voliak Rock offer to us the opportunity to release it as a CD. We have only 10 songs recorded about 20 min I think. Finally we decided to release as a MCD with some bonus tracks. This is the reason because some people thinks that is a Full-length. For mi is a MCD with bonus tracks. Sound is not the best on this one.

I think Tots Trempant!!! was not a 100% Pesta Porcina album, because I compose about 75% of the shit. This is because some of the rest members joined when the songs was written. Two covers on this work from GUT and DEAD INFECTION.

Experimentacions Septicoporcines (Split with Crani Sèptic ? 2009)

Taken from the 'Ultimo Mondo Rurale', we put 3 songs on this Split CD. There are 2 songs that we think are extremely different than the rest of the stuff in the album, for this fact we decide to put it on the Split. Third Song 'Plat de Cigrons' is a cover from the mighty MACABRE.

Ultimo Mondo Rurale (Full-length – 2010)

This our Official First CD. Good sound and very good songs. This is most sick and is really 100% Pesta porcina. All in the band was working hard for this one. I'm really satisfied with the final result. Rural Sickened Gore grind!!

The tittle of the album and the cover concept was an homage to the gore gods IMPETIGO. Two more covers in thi one from IMPETIGO and HAEMORRHAGE.

Your music does not give the impression of being overtly serious; especially when considering the samples. To those unfamiliar with the language that you use – Spanish or Catalane? – how would you describe what is going on in the compositions? Has this been an aspect that can be found throughout all of your outputs?

J.D: In our lyric contents we talk about rural histories (sometimes true) that we pervert and fill with sickly gore strokes. We use catalan language in our lyrics because is most easy for us to express in our maternal language. We need to put lot of jokes and it's the best for us to do it in catalan. It's not a political question.

Judging from your music it seems impossible to make something out from the various types of guttural screams and growls. What is it that the listener should take with him or her? Is there something you want to express through your music?

J.D.: Yeah!, in Pesta Porcina we uses a lot of different kind of vocal recordings. We think that it's good for a most sicko atmosphere. In the recording of the 'Ultimo mondo rurale', there are some collaborations on vocal recordings. You can find about 10 different kind of vocals!!!

How do you see the conflicting fields of eating meat vs vegetarianism or veganism?

J.D.: What about to eat shit? There's nothing better to eat a big piece of shit! A closed human recycling system. Everything that comes out, log back!!

What about city vs. rural landscape? When it comes to the mystification of the small towns these days, then what would be your opinion towards it? The track titles indicate that you deal with this topic, or?

J.D.: We like to live in small town, cities are full of stupid people that comes every weekend to the rural towns. They destroy our forest looking for mushrooms and disturb the cows and sheeps. What the fuck! Maybe never they see an animal?

In our lyrics we want to ridiculize a this fact, and lot of songs talk about this. We have some usual characters like Masovera canibal, El zoofilic de la garrotxa, (Canibal peasant, The zoophilic from the Garrotxa). They fight agains the 'Pixapí' invasion. (Pixapí means a citizen from the big city usually Barcelona. A correct traduction will be Pissing Tree)

How did the split album with Crani Sèptic came to happen? Why do you have only one of these so far; a lot of bands of your type of music tend to spread them en masse.

J.D.: With Crani Septic we have a good friendly. We play together in some gigs and we think will be good to do a split.

What feedback do you have received over the years regarding your releases?

J.D.: We are very happy because all the feedback be great. We are masturbating ourselves during last five years and we have our dicks irritated by this fact. Our balls are very, very drought!

Did you have had a chance to play on stage already? Can you share some experiences? Would you play on a small farm?

J.D.: Of course we play a lot of gigs to the date. There some good stories to explain yes. I remember a gig at Infernò in Barcelona city that the light goes out few minutes before our show and we can't play. In the Brutologos the band play in a stage that was builded over a little poultry.

YEEESS! We like very much to play in a small farm! Will be great!. I think we play in a little farm in Lleida, I'm not sure 'cause I can't play on this gig for personal problems.

Do you have some forthcoming releases? What are the plans for the future?

J.D.: Yes we are working on our next album probably named 'Pork Aventura'. Future plans are simple. Record a CD and play in a lot of farms and pigsties as possible.

In case someone is interested in your music, how and where can this person buy your stuff?

J.D.: Don't want our stuff on the Virgin Store that's for true! But you can contact the band directly to buy one or more of our releases, T-shirts, plates, Keychains, and the rest of shit we have on our merch list.

How can people get in touch with you? What Internet sites do you use?

J.D.: People can find us through different channels on internet:

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Pesta-Porcina/218018578232706>

Myspace: <http://www.myspace.com/pestaporcina>

e-mail: jdalmau666@gmail.com (Jofre Dalmau)

Pestaporcina@gmail.com (Albert Ilobarro)

Die_by_gurthang@hotmail.com (Pep Bendit)

Some closing comments if you like

J.D.: Well, Thanks a lot to you for this interview, I enjoyed to answer it a lot! And to the rest of the followers of the band and the alse of the mag. Take care mothefuckers! Pesta Porcina was here to spread the word of Pig!

OV HOLLOWNESS

Why don't you start off by introducing the band a bit? When and by whom had it been started? Who would conduct this interview?

It began in 2009. Probably like many one man projects the interest in music is more on the composing side of it, as opposed to the 'playing' part of it all. It is not jamming, it is composing that is the drive. I think I saw so many others making their own music, on their own, mostly in that genre what we call 'depressive black metal', and as a format for making music, I saw that as being a way I too would pursue this. I have always put songs together, but it was around 2009 the formality of this combined with the acquired abilities at home recording being where I could get it done, I guess all coming together to be able to make an album. You are doing well at conducting this interview.

What happened between your 2011 Drawn Descend release and your recent instalment "The World Ends"?

I always thought I would plan out the following albums, like I would like to do this or that for the next, but it doesn't end up happening like that. Riffs and ideas are just recorded here and there and then songs develop from that. That is how I see the creating end of things. As for what happened, well the main thing of course was signing with Code666. What can I say, just a good opportunity to be able to have the music heard by more that may be interested in it. A lot of personal things happened as well, mid-life passage type of things, learning, growing etc.

What are the core essences of Ov Hollowness? How does this band differ from your other ones; Arkodaemik and Lost Resolve?

The word atmospheric seems to be the term to use to describe the music, but it's tough to say really. Dark, melancholic, long songs at times, more of a dark wave of sound, aggressive as well. Lost Resolve is quite similar in some ways, it is more intended to be my take on this post rock black metal stuff. These labels are awful but it gets the point across I guess. Arkodaemik much simpler to describe, thrashy black metal, or more straight forward black metal with evil sounds and aggression. If I try to think about it from a deeper level, the essences are a bit more from that primal creative flow, just what comes out, just what sounds good, less structured than my other projects, just that expression.

"The World Ends" is a rather definite statement for a title, because it leaves no alternative, no other possible scenario. Are you a pessimist? Is the main title a reflection of the lyrics on this album?

All of the lyrics and topics are certainly open to individual interpretations. In this case, it is more to do with the definition of what is the 'world', an individuals' world they have come to only know and see and live in. The world as a perception, and not the physical world. You see, much of it is false, misleading, in fact I see the title or concept as quite positive, it is the end of the false world, again, the perception, not the Earth so to speak. Yes, I think many of the topics touch on this theme.

Why is it not possible to imagine something in the Pagan spirit; i.e. that the world is cyclical and renews itself over time? "The World Ends" comes with quite a focus on man and mankind.

I am not aware of the specific concept you mention, and if it is something within a Pagan belief then I usually don't take much interest in those things that stem from a belief system. That is a general statement there, I am sure there is more to what you are referring. I am interested more in reality, the objective look at it and understanding of it with a complete openness to all the elements involved. The lyrical topics in the album are about mankind yes. There is a liberating feeling about moving to such a state of awareness and grasping our true reality, most of us are so distanced from that we become so clueless of that fact.

How do you see religions and cults that celebrate the "end time" and hope for some kind of salvation as well as paradise?

It is silly, it is limited thinking for those that don't have the capacity to be objective. Life is constant movement, we always feel getting the next thing or goal is the end, and then we can have paradise. There is always a sense of being unsettled, that is just human nature, if it were not like that then we die or just become useless. It is not natural for many people to be able to step back and observe this happening with life, this suffering, so they then have that strong desire to reach for salvation or paradise, an end to it. It is those that will find comfort in celebrating such false ideas, because oh it feels good to them.

Can you name sources of inspiration when it comes to your lyrics? Do you have some favourite authors?

The inspiration doesn't really come from other sources, it is a personal expression. The influences, sure, they come from anywhere, but it is more like they come from anywhere that are in line with what I already want to say, much of the ideas are not new of course, just reinforced by what someone has sang or wrote before. The question hits me an odd way, because the ideas are from within or at least felt then confirmed by other teachings or whatever. As for a style of lyrics, which I never really gave much attention to in the past, I approached it as a learning, I do pay more attention to what other lyric writers are actually trying to do. Authors, lyric writers, I guess to give some names, I like the styles of lyrics done in Enslaved, In Flames, and Peter D'olving. That being said, it is hard to write lyrics for me, so what is easy it just writing ideas down fast as they are there, really no time to copy another style or whatever.

Leaving these topics behind, how would you describe the differences between your recent release and your previous ones? What can those who have followed your band over the years discover in it that has not been part of it before?

I would not really call my style depressive black metal but in many ways Ov Hollowness has a base in that approach and style of music. This might be what is changing, getting away from those types of sounds to a more rock metal feel. I think much is similar, just new, different feel to the songs. Quality of songs is what I value, to be totally new and original for the sake of it could be done, but it's not important, good songs, good metal that you want to listen to over and over, that is what is important. Production has evolved, lyrical themes totally have evolved, and just some more new Ov Hollowness. Maybe more clean singing, less keyboards, although there never was a whole lot before.

With the new CD, memorable songs that go through different phases, emotional phases I guess, I really think something special has been created here that you probably have not heard anywhere else. I have enjoyed listening to this album more than the others. I mean I usually take a break from listening to my own music after the recording is done, and I have this time as well, but I seem to enjoy playing the album quite a lot. For those that get what is going on here, you will like it.

Well, the drum-computer has remained ... Is there ever a chance to see it vanish from your concept? Do you prefer working alone?

Hey the drum programs now are pretty good, and getting better. Working alone is a must, at least for the writing stage. I would like to use a drummer, totally original fills and patterns would be great. It does seem however, drummers are hard to find, the problem is facilitating it all. Finding a drummer, finding a good one, teaching them the songs, and finding someone who knows this style of music, not an easy task. I don't have time to sell my music and what I am doing to another musician, they would have to 'get it' and want to do it. Now the option of using a session drummer is not bad, but costs money.

It seems you moved a bit away from the dense guitar layers of your previous recordings and more in the direction of riffs that can be recognized more clearly. Have you grown a bit tired of the concept of the early days? Will your other band Lost Resolve work as a playground for this approach from now on?

I used a real amp this time, not a computer amp, that seemed to alter the sound. There is a little of the fuzz that has been part of the Ov Hollowness sound, I like keeping some of that in there. Perhaps a little maturity with the guitar playing, less noisy and more coming back to metal riffs. Also there was less time put into adding different guitar parts over each other, just the main riff and some melodies this time. Lost Resolve will be much like how the EP was, I have some song started for it now and if I ever finish them that might be it.

Is there any chance to hear samples of some sort in your music? Or even a bit more non-metal instruments? Some kind of counterpoint to the overall heaviness?

Outro, the last track on TWEs is a bit like that, an all keyboard song. The ambient samples have been a few here and there, I would like to do more for sure, remember though, I am a metal/thrash/riff/guitar type of player, not so much a keyboard type, I am learning though. The breaks from the heaviness as I see it are the acoustic parts or the clean vocals.

And what might strike as a surprise as well is the tendency to move a bit away from the depressive undertone that your previous recordings had. This latest one has more aggressiveness, more bite. The direction Arkodaemik shines a bit through; on levels even outside this one. Is this where you want to push it all towards? A broader conceptual approach, with larger variety and facets?

Exactly, and that is just what I mentioned earlier. The hopelessness is still there, the depressiveness, it's in me, it's human, but its effect on me has diminished and that will show in the music. I like heavy production, and an aggressive sound, loud guitars so that will always be there I think but yes, with styles of music contained in one album that are just all over the place, that I can't help, it is just the way it comes out.

Also the levels in which the clean vocals appear might raise some eyebrows. Had it been easy to get the done properly and are you satisfied with the result?

The clean vocal melodies just came, I am very happy with them. I try to make a point to keep them dark. Often clean vocals are thought of as being lighter or happier sounding, I think there is an untapped art in making great darker or metal sounding clean vocals. To get them done properly, now that is tough, it involves perhaps recording techniques that I am still learning. I would say the final production of the vocals could have been better, I think that is where a skilled music production engineer would have helped, there is just so much more that could be done. Having said that, in general I am pleased with how it turned out.

What about a vinyl release. Is this something you want to consider as a format at some point in the future?

It has not been considered. Perhaps if there is interest.

How did the change in the label happen?

Drawn to Descend, the previous CD was to come out on Hypnotic Dirge Records, that was the only plan for Ov Hollowness at the time, and such it was released. Later I was contacted by Code666.

What about feedback? How did this changed/developed over the years?

Ov Hollowness is not for everyone. I think for those that understand the music and get it, they are always very kind, great feedback and it really adds value to this thing. There has just been the slow growth of people finding the music as is the case in the metal underground, so the feedback is very good.

What are the plans for the future?

Keep making music, be it Dethdrawn, Lost Resolve, Arkodaemik, or Ov Hollowness. Grow as well, not popularity but develop the music, move it all forward, evolve. Much creating is reliance on that intuition, so it is not always controlled in a logical sense, so for the future, always many unknowns.

Dethdrawn??? You have another project?

Yeah man. its more of a thrash project, older songs. For fun. :) really catchy stuff

In case someone is interested in your music, how and where can this person buy/download your stuff?

Well, the new CD is out now! So go get your copy from Code666/Aural music. iTunes as well. The first two CDs are available at Hypnotic Dirge Records. You can get things from me as well, just e-mail, inhollow@gmail.com. Making music costs me money, so when CDs are actually purchased it's greatly appreciated.

How can people get in touch with you? What Internet sites do you use?

I really need a website but until then use www.facebook.com/ovhollowness, I usually just have time to post updates there only. Of course I can be reached by anyone for anything at inhollow@gmail.com.

Some closing comments if you like

Thank you very much for the interview, and thank YOU, for reading. Support the e-zines and metal websites that you like, and support the music you like by purchasing a shirt or CD. Thanks again.

CELTIBEERIAN

Why don't you start off by introducing the band a bit? When and by whom had it been started? Who would conduct this interview?

We're Celtibeerian, a Folk Metal band born in January 2011 at Ciudad Real, in the center of Spain. We mix music, topics and style both from our present culture and from the historical celtic culture of the celtiberian people, adding our own personal flavour. The idea was born with Julián and Gustavo time ago, and before the end of 2010 they decided to look for people to make this idea true. In January we met in a room Julián, Víctor, Gustavo, Alejandro and David, and we decided to found the band. The definitive lineup (and so far our current lineup) consists in Julián, Gustavo, David, Víctor and Patricia, and we all are going to conduct the interview together.

What have been your reasons for starting a folk band? In your biography you mention past musical experiences. Can you write a bit about these and how they fit into the broader context of this band?

We just wanted to put out of our minds our cultural and musical inquisitivenesses in a way we all liked: metal music. However we always maintain the anchor on the idea of transmitting our view of our own culture and customs, and in this first album we maintain also a comical-festive note at the same time.

Past experiences, yes. Gus as bass and Julián as guitar have played (and still do) in a spanish hard-rock band – Mala Fortuna –, Gus also was member of a death melodic metal band as bass – Incission –, David has been playing for years in the national scene of pure spanish folklore as bagpipe, flute and mainly lute player, but having played several traditional intruments both wind and string, Víctor as drummer of a thrash death metal band – Kondena – and Patricia has many years playing the violin with a traditional greek music band with her family – Compañía Basilópolis – and in a fussion ska reggae band – Los Alicates –. All of this contributes to a musical background richness for all of us when we want to compose, brainstorm or play our own music, providing also all the experience we all have on stage already.

Celtibeerian ... this name needs some explanation. What would be your favourite Spanish beer? Does it differ in taste from imported one?

Well... we have many brands of beer in Spain, fitting every taste. One we all (Celtibeerian) agree as one of the best is "Estrella Galicia" (but if it's good and cheap, we're up to any beer hahaha). Of course flavour differs with imported ones, as it differs between one national brand and another.

Did you ever tried to brew beer yourself or do you ever consider doing so?

Almost, but nope ;)

Why do you have two compositions on wine, then? Praise to the Vineyards, Sacred Wine are the ones in question. Seems to a sham package after all: Celtiwineian. (that is a German-only joke)

Our land is a wine producer one (and a good one, ähem ähem). We're not a "beer metal" band, we're folk metal, we take care of our land, our culture and our traditions, and there's no better way to do it than sharing our products, both in our music and on stage (you can ask, if possible, to any of our fans who has seen us live if they've tasted wine with us while playing a gig, we offer it from a wineskin, we just throw it and ask it "to be returned empty!")

Ok ... now a bit more serious. What is your name all about? How does this fictional language fit into the broader context of the other Indoeuropean ones? Is it a topic of current scientific research? Do you plan to use it for future recordings?

Celtiberian = Celtiberian (celtic + iberian) + beer. This is not only because we like beer and we drink it, but because of the English word play we could do with it and that we liked it to represent in an original way the tradition, the festivity and an historic celtic people.

Fictional language... "fictional" with small print actually. Celtiberian language is an actual and a dead language, sadly it's almost unknown even for paleolinguistics due to the lack of material found and studied. It's indeed a topic of current scientific research. David put the tag "fictional" to say "this might not be historically 100% correct" and called it "keltokurmis" or "celtiberian" to make that point clear to avoid possible misunderstandings. The language fits inside the branch of continental celtic (indoeuropean) languages, like old breton and gaulish (you can speak directly with David about this, he's the one researching and doing all of this and he'll be glad to share knowledge down to the level of detail the reader wants).

And we do not plan to use it, we are actually using it already ;)

What about musical education? Have all of the members received such or are some of them self-taught?

Patricia is the only one who has formally received professional musical education in conservatory, 8 years with violin. The rest of us haven't gone to conservatory, each one has learnt music in one or another way, by internet or books or with personal teachers.

Why do you have an emphasis on traditional instruments, while the guitars are reduced to a role of adding power, intensity and volume?

Our musical way to see folk metal is mainly based on giving a main role to the traditional instruments, while drums, bass and guitar are put in a second line to provide the rhythmic base and power of metal music.

Is there a chance to hear some kind of solo part that would include guitars and traditional instruments; in the sense of switching ideas from one element to the other?

Yes, there is. In our first album there's a solo part in "The Path" which is started by the bagpipe, continued by the guitar, then the violin and again the guitar to finish it. In future work we have more elaborated orchestration and the listener will have the opportunity to hear more "switching games".

What kind of instruments make an appearance on your debut album?

The already mentioned drums, bass and guitar as metal base providers, then on the traditional side we have violin, galician bagpipe (gaita gallega), and different baroque flutes. Some songs included acoustic guitars, little percussive instruments, jew's harp and vocal arrangements.

How would you describe your music? What are the core essences and what influences from your cultural environment/heritage can be found in it?

Our music in our first album is quite straight and direct, we want to transmit to the listener good feelings, party and brotherhood, that's the essence. Then going down to more details, there're songs in which the lyrics tell a story, tale or traditional song of our land, sometimes we just use a traditional melody, some other times we use the lyrical topic. For example, "Praise to the Vineyards" represents the cycle of vintaging, "Sacred Wine" is the binding of the feasts while sharing the wine, "Full Moon" lyrics is the adaptation of the story of an old castilian anonymous romance, "Gallæcia" is a melody of galician traditional songs...

Tirikantam would be the title of your debut release. Does this term have a special meaning and how long have the tracks been in the making?

"Tirikantam" (pronounced /tri'kantam/) means "to the assembly", the main topic line of the album is an assembly of neighbour towns that meets to decide who's going to host that year's summer festivities, and the development of those feasts.

The tracks of this album were been in the making for 5 months, we started the band in January 2011 and we were recording at the studio in May-June.

Two aspects are somewhat striking: the length of roughly thirty minutes and the existence of four instrumentals. Why do you have so many short tracks and often no vocals? Do you prefer this intense and fast type of music? Something that reminds on "high speed folk"?

It's our first album and we are self-produced, when we had this work done we didn't want to delay it releasing it or to make our songs longer when they songs "didn't ask" to be longer. It's not a preferences issue, it's just what we thought of it when we listened to our own tracks, trying to put ourselves also on the side of a listener, to assure that our feelings to be transmitted were actually there, that we'll feel the same.

We have 4 instrumental tracks, but that's only a matter of chance and coincidence, there were songs which needed a lyrical line, some others didn't.

"High speed folk" is an unknown term to us, we do our music as we felt it and as we wanted to express it in the moment we composed it, without fixing our minds to this or that specific "standards". Anyway, the style in our first album can be defined as fast and intense rhythms, yes.

Speaking of vocals, what do the texts deal with? You do not seem to handle too serious topics, do you? And why don't you have female vocals?

The lyrics deal, as we have already said in other answers before, of the development of feasts and brotherhood among a group of united towns which prepare together the summer offerings and feasts. In this first album we do not handle purely serious topics, neither we handle pure "just-party" topics. Most of the lyrics have always some humour or joke in them, but we always maintain as background some traditional touch of our culture.

In this first album we didn't see necessary to use female vocals beyond some arrangements in the song "Tirikantam". Although in future work we're already making some songs with a more important present of female voice and more serious lyrics dealing with historical topics.

At times the music feels as if you want to give the impression of a festive atmosphere in which the listener has to take part in. Has this been the original intention when you planned this release? Are you satisfied with the result? What do you want the listener to feel when experiencing to your music?

It's the atmosphere we wanted to transmit in this first album: there's a party and you're part of it (either you're listening the album at home or you're in a live performance). That was and has been the original intention to this album, and so far we've seen that we have succeeded in most cases :D

Do you play cover versions and do you interpret these in a more folkish kind of way? Can you write a bit about the song "An Dro"?

A listener who is used to listen celtic/folk music would recognize some melodies, like the one used in "Sacred Wine" (an adaptation of a medieval-renaissance song from France, called Tourdion), An Dro (traditional Breton music for an homonymous traditional dance) and Gallæcia (Galician traditional music).

Can you shed some light on the Spanish folk metal or folk music scene? How do you fit into it?

First we should define the borders between what is folk, what is folklore and what is folk metal.

Folklore in Spain is, depending on the region, almost forgotten music by its people or a very present music on their lives, but in any spot of the country you'll find associations dedicated to preserve this music and tradition of every region (like the one David is part of).

On the folk side, there're many bands, mainly in the north of Spain, that do folk music, but you can really find bands like them spread through our geography.

Folk metal however is an almost new born scene in Spain, you'll find some bands in different points of Spain but not so many, and we're the first ones to move it towards the rest of the world.

So we fit into folk stages (pure or fusion) and metal stages (specially folk, pagan or even "viking")

And ... as you have played some concerts already: what kind of audience do you have? Is it only the metalheads or also folks from other genres/styles?

We've played actually a lot of concerts for the time we're in active, and we have had audiences of every kind, from a street public of a town where you can find any kind of age and condition (from 5-6 year old children to their grandpas), to festivals where the public knew they were there to hear metal.

As far as we know, the main impression of this public always has been good.

What kind of feedback have you received so far (concerts/album)?

At our concerts we have always connected with our public, transmitting them the party feeling of our first album to that moment, inciting them to dance and jump with us. The album has been generally well received, both in Spain and in several places of Europe, Asia and America – as far as we know.

We're really very very satisfied and happy with the feedback received along this little-more-than-a-year time that has been our album out, since it was released.

Do you have some forthcoming releases? What are the plans for the future?

We're planning to release a new album this year, and in our last concerts we've presented to the public some new track as advance, since we have already finished some of them. Our plans for the future can be summarized to combine concerts with composition and future recording/editing/releasing of the album (and with our personal lives hahahaha)

In case someone is interested in your music, how and where can this person buy your stuff?

In any of our performances they can buy any band stuff (CD, T-shirts, badges, stickers, flyers, sweatshirts...).

We've done several international shipments of CDs and merch. In Germany you can find our album sold by Einheit Produktionen.

How can people get in touch with you? What Internet sites do you use?

Anyone can contact us via e-mail at contact@celtibeerian.com and if this person wants to place an order of any of our stuff, it can be done contacting through orders@celtibeerian.com.

We're also present in social networks like Twitter (@Celtibeerian), our official Facebook page (facebook.com/Celtibeerian) and MySpace (myspace.com/Celtibeerian). We have a website under construction (www.celtibeerian.com) which links all our social networks, and our contact information and dossiers are also available there.

Some closing comments if you like

Many greetings and regards to our followers and to the readers of the magazine "A Dead Spot of Light", we hope to see you soon at any stage and share our music and culture with you (and drinks! :D)

KARST

Why don't you start off by introducing the band a bit? When and by whom had it been started? Who would conduct this interview?

Greetings! It's Dániel Czákó here. My band, Karst [Orchestra Miskolc] is four-pieced - the lineup is Kristóf Váradi-Orosz - vocals / lyrics / concepts, Balázs Hubicska - guitars, Tamás Várkony - bass and me - drums / backing vocals and main composing. We are an extreme act from Hungary. I have formed it in 2005 under the name Nebulosus Fatum. Then purposes changed a lot but it all started there. We switched the name to "Karst" in 2009.

The word "karst" appears in the German language as well as in English, but how it is supposed to be understood? Are there actually references to other languages or does it have a meaning that is limited to Hungarian alone?

Yes, we chose the English form of this word. Its Hungarian form is "karszt", pronounced similarly. So it supposed to be understood in its common way - a geographical definition.

Can you describe the place where you from a bit and share also some words on the local cultural sphere if you like. The Bükk mountains are not far off, right? What impact do these aspects have on your music?

I'm glad you mentioned it, connects well to the previous question. We live in our city, Miskolc, surrounded by Bükk, it is a karst mountain range named after the most common tree in it, beech.

It's one of our old inspirations, that's why we chose that name. The other band members, my friends, quite often do trips in the forests. In the past, when Black Metal played an important role in my life, close nature gave me much inspiration.

Note by Kristóf: Miskolc is the capital of our region, Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County. History of the town's heart goes back many centuries. Still, the rest of the city can be described as a highly overgrown post-industrial remain of the socialist decades. Culturally most of its inhabitants lost their roots since in the 1950's. They were converted from agricultural peasants to working class and moved to the new city just under construction. Unfortunately, by the end of the 1980's most factories closed. People both lost their jobs and proper identity at the same time. In general, Miskolc is the place where very old buildings meet soviet-style blocks and nature. A place most people want to get away from. We have a university too, youth there are rather isolated, not worth mentioning.

Sadly the cultural sphere is – both mainstream and underground– poorer than it used to be here. In my opinion, cultural events in a town represent the quality of life. But careless attitude converts it into wastelands. Now most things rather happen in the capital, from main art events to underground concerts. The local scene is nearly motionless because of the economic changes of the region, as we discussed it with our vocalist some time ago. It's not about politics, these are facts.

Can you lay out the history of the band a bit? What made you start Nebulosus Fatum, the precursor to Karst? Why did you change the band name back then and are there conceptual connections/differences between these two bands?

While listening to some important bands of the Black Metal genre (Immortal, Gorgoroth, Burzum, Darkthrone and from Hungary: Ater Tenebrae) I decided to play the genre too, as I began dealing with musical instruments since my childhood. After some weak tries I have decided to continue with a more serious one. So I formed Nebulosus Fatum. Of course it was also weak in the beginning, but that's how the band was born - to make old school, feral coldness. The name changing to Karst had many reasons. We found the previous name too long, and it was spelled with irregular latin grammar and didn't fit the atmosphere we improved during the first years. As an aim, we have always been searching our original sound since the first well-working line-up came together. So we needed a better one - and it fits ourselves. The conception was forming for a long period, so it's rather a slow innovation than a huge change between the two bandnames and the music itself.

What are the core essences of your music? What kind of music does Karst play? Can you name some references?

The basis of our music is Black Metal. (About this I write more below, in Question #9.) But when our music is viewed in general, different tones also appear. The Post-Punk melancholy of the 80s, the attitude of greatest old American jazz inventors such as Miles Davis, John Coltrane and Thelonious Monk, or the Hungarian ethno-jazz Dresch 'Dudás' Mihály Quartet also touched us. With all of that, we always try to compose a homogeneous unity, not a cross-over with constant, sharp skips between genres. The only principle is the atmosphere: In our opinion our compositions should be dark and whirling.

According to these details, sometimes we got the description that we play "Progressive Black Metal". Whether it's true or not - we use the term "extreme rock", it consists what's important.

If I have to say some "contemporary" acts which have a well-working formula parallel to our aims, could be Borknagar (till 2000), Enslaved (from Isa album), maybe Opeth. And of course, the mighty Voivod, with their whole discography.

How does Karst fit into the broader Hungarian (black) metal scene? How would you describe this scene anyway?

We gladly experienced on our last concerts that so many different faces are interested in what we do. From screamo/hardcore dudes to the "philosopher metalists" and so on. It might be because of the mixture we made in our music and also on the solid live performance. Although we have some friend bands, we do not wish to belong to any scene. We are what we are. As I wrote, the scene decayed a lot if we compare it to the buzz of the 2000's in Hungary. It's a sad thing as people lose their interest in making a well-produced band, because of the current, local economic state. Nowadays, without money the improvement is nearly impossible.

But not only to write negative things, there are some interesting older and newer acts here, not only in metal. I think creating something from inside still can move young musicians to work on. I won't mention names, search for yourselves, it is worth the effort - maybe you will find some pleasant surprises.

Three releases have been spread under the banner of Karst. Why don't you write about these? (Concept, sound, history/background etc.)

demo2009

It was released also under the previous name. Containing three tracks, it shows the switch to a more original, wide-opened composing. After making the Nebulosus Fatum EP "Bükkerdő" with it's straight Black Metal sound, it was important to make "demo2009". Here we started taking apart from that scene. It's the first one where we used the lyrics of our vocalist, Kristóf. He also drew the cover and inlay. We made the whole recording in our rehearsal room. After that we gave it to a sound engineer and he made the mixing/mastering. Also, on this release, the current Karst-sound appeared the first time with our vintage overdriven guitars and living, melodic bass lines. I hope once I could call it our "signature" sound.

Cleaning a Cave (Full-length, 2011)

Cleaning a Cave was released in 100 hand-numbered copies. Covers and concept was made by Kristóf again. We recorded it in the same way but we spent more time on it to make it out more professionally. We borrowed some instruments for the recording sessions. I think it's very important to use as suitable instruments as possible. The full-length contains 10 tracks in cca. 45 minutes. We call this work a closing of our first era - we played the songs so much live before the recordings. The tracks are in order from the oldest written to the latest. We have very good critical reception to this stuff.

Octahed / Karst (Split, 2012)

It's our latest release up to now. We've released it with another Hungarian band. It's limited to 25 copies from us, each one with individually hand-painted covers. We have two tracks on it. It seemed they won't fit our next album, so we decided not to bury them but releasing them separated. The first one is "Merülj", it's some sort of contemporary jazz, made especially for a talentfinder in the past. It features a special orchestration - my once-been schoolmate Krisztián Dávid ördög plays saxophone on it. He's a talented jazz sax student on a Music Academy now. The other track is "Nem tudom, hogy hol van a helyem". We have made a cover, the original one is from Szögletes Üveggolyó, a cultic, dadaist freak project of our friends from our hometown. I think the original had very dark vibrations as I heard it on their album. Thanks to them!

Even though your music shows some obvious references to the black metal scene, the cover artworks of your releases are a stark contrast to this and have a rather artistic touch. So, how is this juxtaposition to be understood? How do fans and reviewers react to this aspect?

Our artworks are made by Kristóf, our vocalist/lyricist. It's his own world. I don't think that there's big contrast between our music and the covers. Each of his works have an exact meaning (same as the lyrics) - but you can translate them for yourself as you want. The topics are usually deep and sombre, I think it definitely adds to the production.

There were one or two reviews where the writer didn't find the point of our artistic side but everywhere else we got good feedbacks. I think when someone seriously thinks about them it's not difficult to see the essence.

In your biography you write the following:

"Raw Norwegian Black Metal is one of the undeniable and important musical influences of Karst's open workshop. Despite the similarities, the band does not wish to describe itself as a Black Metal act, regarding its traditions." - Can you explain these contradictory juxtapositions?

Well, as I wrote, the basis of our sound is Black Metal. The classic Norwegian-style guitar handling, the traditional blastbeats and of course the voice refers to this genre. But, as we often claim it, we do not wish to call Karst a Black Metal act. It is because we state that Black Metal must have that evil, distorted spiritual core. "Black Metal must be satanic" - as some said. It's the same as the true Blues music works - when you play another artist's track, although from note to note - it's not Blues. Not until it comes deeply from the soul.

Why don't you play the "pure" formula so to speak? Are you able to enjoy the modern instalment of black metal?

We began with playing in the pure, raw way. But then, as I learned more and more about music in general, I realised that there are a lot of different arrangements that would make an exciting effect if we put them together. To tell the truth, my once-been drum teacher, after viewing our show, asked me why don't we put silent parts in our tracks. He doesn't even know much about extreme musics, he's just thinking on it. It awakened an idea in me. We want to work as an open workshop where the pillars are made by our visions, not by the limits of genres.

About the "Post-Black Metal" stuff... well, I am not interested in nowadays Post-"Black Metal" guys. I can't take this consant, ethereal catharsis-feeling seriously. In Karst, it's fortunately our own way. We would probably do something similar, even if the others didn't exist.

Do you have an opinion on the development of the black metal scene?

I don't care much about this. Norwegians laid down the foundations in the early 90s. Then, as time elapsed, of course different improvements arrived from different parts of the world. My habit is rather digging back to the roots and the old ones, instead of listening to the other newcomers. I feel I can learn more from that.

On your Octahed / Karst split album you present a rather free style kind of music, which is rather jazzy and rockish. Is there a chance to hear something like this combined with the ordinary black metal routine?

As I wrote those were different tracks on the split compared to other songs we have arranged lately. Now, during the rehearsals we plan to make our next full-length varied yet homogene. So we'll se it.

How does the chemistry in the band work? Who is responsible for the lyrics and the song-writing?

Mostly I write the themes of the songs, on guitar and rarely on piano. Then we discuss the layout with the others. First I try to create the basic idea of a song and then we use it to build the tunes. After we're done with the musical parts, Kristóf, our vocalist starts to write his lyrics. He needs solitude and time for the session: first the subject forms then it comes to verses. We finish the vocal parts usually together, with added backing lines. I am in a fortunate state that I can work with the others whose opinions also mean a lot. This joint work makes the music more fluent.

Who is Szögletes Üveggolyó? Can you write a bit about this band? Why did you pick them?

Szögletes Üveggolyó hails from our hometown. Their name means Angular Glass Ball. We've known the members for some time, they often come to our concerts and hang out with my bandmates. I chose one of their tracks, "Nem tudom, hogy hol van a helyem" (means "I Do Not Know Where Is My Stand") to play 'cause I enjoyed the original so much. Although it's a quite uncommon song from them, as they're rather an excentric, near-insane somewhat spiritual-dadaist act.

Is your version of their track a close interpretation or have you varied elements in it? What do you prefer nearly identical cover versions or rather free approaches?

Well, especially for this song - the original one was recorded only with keyboards and drum machine. When we orchestrated the themes for ourselves for guitar and bass, it changed a bit of course. There weren't any further variations needed.

In the last few years we covered some other tracks too, like Voivod's "The Prow"; Sodom's "Ausgebombt" (for a thrash event), CPg's "Reisz" and "Azt kész" (a cultic Hungarian punk group), Burzum's "Det Som En Gang Var" (for a special event), etc. These were intended to be exact interpretations of the originals. They were all chosen because we think they're awesome as they are - so we didn't think we have to change anything.

Another thought which belongs here... I claim that a band must know the original song at least if they cover a song and decide to arrange changings in it. I'm only telling this 'cause I hate when a song is played in a different way just because the musicians were careless to learn the themes. It's quite a shame in this way.

Your lyrics are all in Hungarian, but you provide also translations in English. It seems natural to ask whether you have ever tried to sing the music in the other language? Do you feel that black metal in Hungarian receives a special touch through this language?

We use Hungarian lyrics, composition could be far more nuanced and diverse for us. So it didn't come up to use English. It's an underground, extreme production, here the lyrics play a different role from pop musics. I don't know how foreigner listeners like the sound of our words, but some said that Hungarian speech sounds like "it comes from tales". As I experienced, our language can be used pretty well for singing.

Can you write a bit about your live experiences? Do you play your music on stage in the same way as on your recordings?

We write each tune to be played on concerts. The real place for the music of Karst is certainly the stage, where the songs can come alive. It's always a kind of spiritual experience for us. My icons are the bop musicians of the '60s, when everything depended on the performance and there weren't any differences between the live sound and studio-recorded result. In this case I reject studio tricks. We also try not to repeat ourselves when it comes to live shows and to add some special content - a cover, an older, rarely played tune or a brand new one.

Do you have some forthcoming releases? What are the plans for the future?

We are working on our 2nd full-length album, yet untitled. It will contain 10 new songs. We are nearly done with the writing session. The recording will take place in summer 2013. We'd like to release it with the help of a label, it can result wider distribution.

After it I also have plans. Not exactly for further records but orientations and projects. As new influences get me, I am often thinking about where we should move and reach with Karst... it depends on creativity and the ambitions toward quality. I hope once I can say we are arrived.

In case someone is interested in your music, how and where can this person buy your stuff?

At the moment we are our own distributors so the orderings are arranged by us. So anyone who feels interested, feel free to contact us directly.

How can people get in touch with you? What Internet sites do you use?

We have an official homepage at www.karst.hu. Besides this we have a site on Facebook ([facebook.com/karstmiskolc](https://www.facebook.com/karstmiskolc)) and also on Youtube and Bandcamp with our songs. If someone would contact us, please keep in mind that the band prefers to get in touch via the e-mail address ([karst at karst dot hu](mailto:karst@karst.hu)) instead of the Facebook-playground.

Some closing comments if you like...

Thanks for the interview opportunity and for your comprehensive questions!
Await the great hope, the wreathing dissolution.

SUBTERRANEAN DISPOSITION

Why don't you start off by introducing the band a bit? When and by whom had it been started? Who would conduct this interview?

Hello this is Terry Vainoras, I started Subterranean Disposition in or around 2009 as an outlet for the songs I had written for a previous group - Insomnius Dei when that project had folded. So far I am the sole recording member, However, I have recently got a live band together to interpret the recorded work.

Can you lay out the background of your band name "Subterranean Disposition"?

The name literally popped into my head one day when I was vaguely thinking about what to name the project. In Hindsight I guess this name is a good match for some of the claustrophobic feeling I personally get from the music and the recurring ideas in the lyrics of being buried by emotions or dealing with the dark underside of subconscious in human existence.

How does this band fit into the broader context of your own history in the metal realm? You had been active in a considerable amount of bands so far. And can you write a bit about your reasons for playing the music that you do?

In my eyes this project is the culmination of years of learning the craft of songwriting and storytelling within many different sub genres of metal in the bands I have been lucky to write and / or play for, much like I have been an apprentice and I can finally use all the talents accrued in the framework of this style I have come to now, long songs with dynamics.

I also write non metal music , yet no matter what style I am using the ultimate goal is to follow the initial idea/s to its logical conclusion. The only reason nowadays is that I MUST do this !!

What are the core essences of your music? What bands would you refer to as influences?

The core of SD is Melody, Rhythm, Dissonance, Dynamics, Repetition, Counterpoints, Atmosphere and Heaviness.

I am influenced by bands or people that find their own voice in the chosen niche of sound and are always trying to expand on their capabilities... this stretches over to film and books for me also, as influences on my music... groups like Bohren und der club of gore, Cult of Luna, Carcass, Neurosis and Converge... People like Tom waits, Sun ra and Kool Keith... Stanley Kubrick, Jim Jarmusch, Hubert Selby jr, Ferdinand Celine.... The list goes on and on.

Your one and only release so far does not offer the standard set of doom/death metal but attempts to break with it in some regard. Not only the saxophone, also strange noise effects should be emphasized. What role do they play in your concept? Will you experiment with these even more in the future or push them back a bit again?

The additional instruments and sound effects are purely based on the song's need for it and to emphasize the atmosphere and or the concept behind the words, sometimes both at the same time. For example the album's first track has the fighting apes at the start and the ethereal angelic voices at the end, the song literally book- ended " Between Apes and Angels" adding further weight to the lyrics.

The demos for a second album have other instruments and sound design on them so far, it is a song by song intuition, if music does not call for it I would not slap something in there for the sake of it.

Does the song-writing for this band come natural or is this a process that takes longer than with one of your other bands? Did you have to scrap a lot of ideas?

Comparing to other groups I have been in, the process is as quick as any other, ideas come and develop when they want to. The difference being having a modest recording set up to capture things easily as compared to jamming and building on riffs with other members.

I have only discontinued one idea out of all the work done on songs so far, who knows it might get revisited years later and finished in a way I can't foresee now !. I have been fortunate to really thoroughly enjoy what has been coming out.

You write on your homepage that your music "explores further the use of dissonance and ambience" and such can be found in five long compositions. How do you keep up the tension and the atmosphere?

A lot of Building the tension and keeping the atmosphere in the music is knowing how long to draw out a riff and when and how change should occur. I can only go by my own intuition or taste on this, and looking back on the album I personally am happy with the structures, to me nothing is too long or too short and every part or nuance is there for the sake of the whole song.

Your position of the following aspects in dealing with your own music:

*** contrasts**

In order for something like Doom to work for my writing I need to explore the contrast's of the given notes through distortion and ambience and have them sequenced to give onward movement, like travelling through different landscapes.

*** silence (see John Cage's 3:44)**

Great reference !! I had not heard of that before. The Old " what you don't play" is very important. There is a few one bar rests in-between certain passages that work to the advantage of the change.

*** noise**

I like Noise !! Repetition of dissonance almost to the point of Noise is very effective in creating tension, as in the middle of "Seven Sisters of Sleep"

*** counterpoints**

S.D has given me more opportunity to have two or three different guitar lines overlapping each other, a freedom for counterpoints on different motives than any other project so far. Sometimes of course everything playing in unison is great for heaviness, but the more ambient aspects Definitely call for it.

On your homepage you mention another band that played a role in this regard: Insomnius Dei. How does the music on their one and only output differ from the Subterranean Disposition one and what are possible similarities?

Well I played in that band, this debut S.D album was written with it being the second Insomnius Dei album in mind so I would say it has a lot in common. I was inspired at the time to use the template of the Insomnius songs written by Mark kelson and add my own voice to that style. As far as what differs, one was written by mark and the other by me. A common thread I suppose is my lyric writing style.

Is there a chance to see more musicians joining your ranks or are you satisfied with your minimalist line-up right now? What about some additional guest musicians? The saxophone part had been nice though rather short.

I have enlisted some friends to help me play the album Live, we are currently doing shows around Australia and Hopefully will head over to Europe in the future. As far as recordings go I am quite confident in laying down the songs myself, perhaps for the second album I will get a drummer in, or I may do it myself. I will have guests come in to do record parts as they come up song to song. There will be a few different instruments on the next one. We are looking at featuring the sax a bit more also, time will tell if it will work with the material at hand.

“Between Apes and Angels”, the title of the opener, is a strange take on the Manichaeian world view that is commonly expressed in monotheistic religions. Do you see humans as apes and do we have to transcend into a metaphysical sphere in order to reach some kind of utopian state?

I think the crux of the lyrics for “Between Apes” for me personally when I read them back is just the question of have we fulfilled our potential as human beings ? Or are we stuck in between the primitiveness of our animal and hominid ancestors and the so called potential to evolve beyond our current failings into super humans, living gods (or in a metaphysical sense Angels ??)

Do we humans have a certain tendency towards self-hate?

I believe that we do have that tendency, I think a large percentage of the terrible things people do to others are an outward projection of self hatred... Generally people are not educated to look within for the answers to their problems and so you get fear, frustration and violence which is a cycle that is hard to break and carries on through generations and nations.

What do your lyrics generally deal with and can you also write a bit about your approach in expressing your texts. From the mere sight these seem to be rather short commentaries or texts.

In general lyrics for SD I would describe as different aspects of the human condition... I have been writing lyrics for a long time now within the different music I have done over the years, for me it is the same approach as the music, a line of words or maybe just the idea might come out and I will follow and sculpt it until I feel it is right fit to the rhythm and feeling of the music and says what it wants to say. Sometimes I am not sure what the meaning is until I have a chance to be away from it after it is finished, other times I have a clear idea and pursue it that way.

How has the feedback been so far?

So far I think it has been quite positively received in terms of reviews and general feed back from listeners. I am still happy with the end result of the recording and all the opinions and comments, positive or negative is really just a bonus for me.

What about plans to play live? Or is SD a mere studio band?

Yes ! Like previously said I have assembled some great musos to bring the album to life and we performed our debut show in our hometown of Melbourne just last week, which went very well !

Three more shows are happening in Australia for the foreseeable future,

I hope to get out to Europe this year, so if you want to see this music live in your town let us know !!

Do you have some forthcoming releases? What are the plans for the future?

The demos of a Second full length album are done and hopefully I will do the proper recording sometime in the near future. Future plans are just to be happy making and releasing music and when the conditions are right to celebrate that with live activity.

In case someone is interested in your music, how and where can this person buy your stuff?

The Best way to get the album is by visiting www.hypnoticdirgrecords.com/ for a physical copy, or the HDR bandcamp for a digital Download.

There is also many other Distro labels carrying the album worldwide, check your local distro to see if they have it.

How can people get in touch with you?

I use facebook like everyone else, also people can get in touch via the Subterranean website and www.terryvainoras.com which has a lot of my other music projects past and present on there as well.

Some closing comments if you like

Thank you very much for this Interview opportunity, Great questions I had to spend a bit of time with! Check out the debut album and hopefully see you all on tour.

NETRA

Why don't you start off by introducing the band a bit? When and by whom had it been started? Who would conduct this interview?

Ever since I started writing material back in 2003, I have always been the sole person involved in netra. My name is Steven Le Moan, I shall conduct this interview.

What does "netra" mean or what do you want to express with this name? Why is it not capitalized?

"netra" is a breton word which means literally "nothing". It is indeed purposely not capitalized, to arouse a feeling of neutrality.

Considering the complexity of your music it seems natural to ask what the original idea had been. What is it that you try to express through netra?

When it comes to city life, many feelings come to my mind. First, there is a lack, an absence. You see, I grew up in a small town, not far from the sea, not far from beautiful forests. This feeling of being surrounded with places where nature still reigns is somehow anchored in me, and when you take it away from me, I tend to become scared, almost claustrophobic. Then, and most importantly, city life calls to my mind the notion of fear. The fear of social interaction, of other people's thoughts and judgement. The fear of being different, just as much as the fear of being like everybody else. The fear of embarrassment, boredom and loneliness. The fear of violence and all the horrors we see on the news.

Something that came to my mind while listening to the music is that the multifacetedness as well as conflicting elements reflect the cosmopolitan nature of our days. Is this a sentiment that points in the "right" direction?

It sounds very accurate to me.

How well does the music of netra and your own preferences coincide? Do you force yourself to listen to something you have not touched earlier and bring these new elements into the spectrum of your band?

Perspective. A lot of it. That's what I need to get the better out of my hectic mind activity.

By the way, is netra your only band right now or are you active in other projects as well?

I also play the guitar and sing in a stoner rock band called Stangala. It is a totally different business though, it has a lot more to do with Kyuss, Electric Wizard and that kind of heavy, drug-fueled, vintage shit. You can check out our first album on Solitude Productions as well as our videos, featuring vintage zombies and stuff!

How would you describe your music? Do you have some core essences that you like to return to again and again?

I try to avoid that, but nevertheless I like the way everything tends to fall back in the same place. It implies somehow that what I create comes from deep within my personality, which does not change so much with time (so far).

What are the differences between Mélancolie Urbaine and Sørbyen? While a translation of the first name is available readily enough, the second one needs some explanation. What does Sørbyen refer to and has this found expression in the music somehow?

Sørbyen is, in my opinion, less claustrophobic, more open-minded than its predecessor. This new album can be seen as some kind of tribute to the time I spent in a city called Gjøvik in Norway, but not only. There are a lot of things in "Sørbyen", plenty of emotions, memories, good times, bad times, it's a real slice of life.

Why do you use black metal for your music? It seems strange to merge something like trip hop, a genre that is generally rather melodic and harmonic, with extreme dissonances from this metal genre. And what is the advantage in this regard of the black metal genre compared with the death metal or heavy metal one?

I think I just write music that resembles the one I listen to, no big deal. It is all a matter of perspective I guess. I never had the intention to blend genres for the sake of being original. That being said, it is always a challenge to find the right sound, melody, lyrics to depict something as abstract as an emotion. Therefore it is necessary to keep an open mind if you want to achieve this goal.

Why don't you have falsetto or operatic vocal styles for instance? Or why no solo guitar parts?

Because I don't feel like it... Note that I do have solo guitar parts, quite a lot of them actually.

What kind of instruments to you use for your recordings? Do you have guest musicians or do you handle all by yourself?

All by myself indeed. I do not own tons of gear. I travel often therefore I need a light configuration. I record the bass and electric guitars, the voices and the rest is basically recorded using a sampler.

Can you write a bit about your lyrics? What does your music deal with? Do you write metaphorical or rather in a direct explicit manner?

For the lyrics, I usually go the minimalistic way, that is, depicting complex thoughts out of very simple words so that nobody can really understand what was initially meant. This is a way to keep things kind of fuzzy since I usually allow myself to have some freedom when it comes to interpret my own songs.

When you compose music, do you think about what the effect that your art will create in the mind of this person? Do you have a certain type of expectancy in this regard?

Not really.

Is there a chance to see you drift off into more cheering regions of the music sphere? Does this depressive undertone come naturally?

"Depressing" is just a label that is used to commonly in my opinion. netra does not deserve it is you ask me. I try to put all kinds of feelings into this music, not only bad ones.

Do you have some forthcoming releases? What are the plans for the future?

I don't know yet. As a matter of fact, I don't really feel inspired for much these days. But wait and see.

In case someone is interested in your music, how and where can this person buy your stuff?

I would recommend to check the usual black metal distribution stores or to contact directly Hypnotic Dirge Records at www.hypnoticdirgerecords.com

How can people get in touch with you? What Internet sites do you use?

You can find netra on the usual social networks, but the easiest way to get in touch is by e-mail: steven.lemoan at gmail.com.

Some closing comments if you like

Thank you very much for this opportunity! All the best to you and your zine. Thanks to the readers.

Review section

AlNamrood – Estorat Taghoot (2010)

(Saudi Arabia; Black Metal)

11 Tracks (CD – Shaytan Productions) -_-_- (56:08)

<https://www.facebook.com/alamroodofficial>, <http://www.shaytanproductions.com/>

Metal from the Middle East is a curious thing. This type of music and the cultural environment are quite likely to clash in one way or another, which brings the musicians in a rather awkward position that, might even endanger their life in one way or another. For instance, a radical black metal band spreading music in Iran requires some amount of braveness (or insanity?) and awareness on how not to be caught by the authorities. In our days the Internet enables bands to distribute their art outside of their local realm and pseudonyms grant the musicians (the vague hope of) a second identity.

Estorat Taghoot, the second full-length album, differs from the preceding one due to a change in character. The 2009 one (استفحل النار) had the titles and lyrics printed in Arabic, which added a strange touch to the overall perception, because a listener from outside the cultural sphere had to deal with two issues: the Arabic language as well as the (for us indecipherable) typologies. The aspect of having to read from right to left is a minor obstacle in this regard. With "Estorat Taghoot" and continuing with "Kitab Al Awthan" none of the booklets contain any texts. Aside from a short description the listener is left in the dark about the actual background of the album. Whether this is good or bad can be debated.

Once the listener has passed the opening instrumental, the band from Saudi Arabia unleashes their distinct black metal brew. Even though the emphasis is put on this particular genre, the overall concept is much broader and relies on additional sounds and noises from this region. Sadly, these appear in a somewhat sterile and synthesized version, which takes away some of the fascination and atmosphere. The aspect of a drum-computer alone is a nuisance, which happens to appear throughout the entire discography of the band, but the overall aspect cuts deeper in this regard. With the use of electronic equipment instead of real instruments – in terms of certain traditional equipment –, facets of the music resemble in style a certain trend in the West: the merging of occidental and oriental ideas. Yet how this all plays out is rather from the perspective of the former region than the latter, which adds a strange touch to it all. A pseudo-reality is established, which, for numerous reasons, can be difficult to differentiate from another one. Maybe this line of reasoning sets the bar too high for bands from countries, whose socio-cultural environment makes it difficult on various levels to play, record and spread metal anyway. Nevertheless, this matter has become of some importance recently and should be discussed accordingly.

AlNamrood play black metal with a certain focus on speed and dynamics. Calm and quite moments are rather rare and it seems the band does not feel overtly impressed by such a counterpoint. Guitars and vocals create together a dominant alliance, whose lines are hardly ever penetrated. In concept it is somewhat conservative and does not attempt to be too progressive, which finds expression in the tendency to play one melody line with all instruments. The examples of bands, whose concept would be similar to this are legion, which brings the musicians from Saudi Arabia in good company. With some kind of variation in the instrumentation and the elements this aspect can be compensated a bit, but in case the

drums are too dominant, it all feels a bit awkward and tiring. There is this air of a “safe approach” that hangs around this release. Reaching out to audiences outside of the own realm, because of rather obvious reasons, while trying to add just enough nuances to stand out in the interpretation of the black metal genre without leaving too much of a bitter taste. Distorted vocals, often with multiple layers, add a certain amount of aggressiveness to the performance, which comes with guitars on top of it.

It is an interesting though occasionally slightly sterile release. Also the air of the underground cannot be shaken off entirely; this can especially be felt in the drum-computer, whose programming is anything but optimal. Nevertheless, the second album from this band can be seen as an example that even under such severe cultural restrictions, like they are common in Saudi Arabia, extreme music like black metal can flourish to some extent. Purists might sniff at this performance, but those who happen to look beyond the immediate should give this release a try.

AlNamrood – Kitab Al Awthan (2012)

(Saudi Arabia; Black Metal)

9 Tracks (CD – Shaytan Productions) -_-_- (47:16)

<https://www.facebook.com/alamroodofficial>, <http://www.shaytanproductions.com/>

Kitab Al Awthan is quite an interesting piece of music. Not only does it mark another output from a band, whose origin provides anything but pleasantries for metal fans or bands, it is also another step in establishing a clearer identity. How all had been merged together has changed a bit and attempts to break away from what had been presented earlier on. Even though it might be a bit daring to name the latest instalment as being filled with counterpoints, these have at least some amount of an impact now. Not all had been woven together into an indistinguishable mess, like it had been the case on one of the earlier albums. Contrasts begin to take shape and play a role. Nevertheless, it would be too far-reaching to speak of a revolution, because the basic setting has remained as it is, while certain facets have received some kind of support.

Yes, especially the keyboards, sadly there are still no “real” Middle Eastern instruments, are able to shine with nice motives that are clearly not of Western origin. In terms of how all of this plays out, it is rather some kind of successive appearance though and with little sophistication in the actual arrangement. “Bani La'em” is a good example in this respect: some kind of Middle Eastern melody thrown hence here and hence there between the keyboards and the guitars. Yet the motive is merely performed in two different ways, despite that both of these have their own distinct character. To put it simple: both offer the same ... and nothing else. It is the absence of something daring, to be at least a bit progressive, to be a bit more extreme and to break a bit out of the narrow corridor of the black metal genre that backfires in some respect. “Min Trab Al Jahel”, the second track, points in the right direction but is inconclusive in this regard as well.

Yet this all should be cast aside to some extent, because the nine compositions are able to create a fascination that make it interesting to enjoy this album; despite all its flaws. The mixture of cultures and the surprising ways in which this tends to play out are the core arguments in favour of this release. With the focus still on the metal side, the music has enough punch to reach out to the metal audience and should not be neglected for the increase in the folk elements over the course of the years. Especially this progression comes over as an attempt to establish a hybrid forms between the two various cultures; something that has found expression in the music already. In terms of progress and the level of variation this band from Saudi Arabia seems to be on the forefront of extreme Middle Eastern metal. Their direction remains unclear though.

Another step might be to push it all a bit more. The drum-computer comes over as an obsolete element now and then – due to the programming and its inability to provide some interesting motives –, while also the limitation on growling pushes the band in a somewhat awkward position, because AlNamrood refuses to set some counterpoints in these. Maybe this reluctance is also motivated due to their social or political environment, which demands from the band to be cautious in regard to topics and contents. Not everything is allowed to be expressed in their home country and even their Metal Archives' entry has seen a removal of the lyrics recently. Hence, this distortion can be interpreted as a means to protect the band from interference by various factions of their surrounding environment. Maybe the small amount of “real” instruments is also a result of the necessity to keep a low profile.

Kitab Al Awthan brings the music to a new level. It presents the concept in a clearer and more balanced kind of way. More variation would still be a nice thing to have, but also in its current arrangement the performance is quite enjoyable. A combination of rather conservative black with folk elements... and influences from Middle Eastern cultures.

Swamp – Praise the Goat (2006)

(Greece; Black / Thrash Metal)

4 Tracks (Tape – Self-released) -_- - (14:36)

What you see is what you get and the cover gives it away: old-school black/death/thrash metal. Four tracks appear on this tape and all is anything but professional. It has a raw sound, does not bother much about timing, attempts to sound evil and presents the art with a cut/paste as well as Xeroxed inlay. Three Greek musicians are behind this project and even though the music tends to drown in pretentiousness, it is at least on a level that is bearable and listenable.

It is music from the underground and can be identified as such. The riffs are minimalist, are repeated to a good amount and are reduced to a guitar and bass line. Some rare solo parts are allowed to appear, but their impact is rather kept low. The 80s are relived or revisited by this demo output. With guitars, whose abrasive sound add alone a nuance of old-school to the performance, the odd fast speaking/screaming expression of the vocals attempts to give the music a kick in the same direction. You can basically throw a variety of names from the early thrash/death/black metal scene around and would still have some hits. Swamp does not seem to care much about it. Not one second on this output presents even the a vague hint on a possible alternative or other direction. And this is the major flaw of this release.

“Praise the Goat” relives the old days but does not add an identity, something which would make this release recognizable or outstanding in any meaningful way. The first spin leaves the listener interested, maybe a bit bewildered but the positive impressions might dominate the negative ones. Yet with each further rotation the tide begins to turn the direction of tiredness and annoyance. This piece by Swamp does not age well ... and the listener will be see through this without much effort or difficulty.

As so often, the general lack of complexity and the emphasis of repetition fires back on the band. While it might be 'true' to play the music with only three musicians, it does not necessarily have to lead to a better performance. In the end the listener is left with a dry chuckle.

Swamp – Nuclear Death (2010)

(Greece; Black / Thrash Metal)

7 Tracks (CD – Time Before Time Records) -_- - (24:48)

The way to sum this album up in a few words would be: Praise the Goat + 3 additional tracks. Reader, do you miss something? No? Really? “Nuclear Death” contains the four tracks from the second demo – not in the best quality – and three additional ones, whose polished sound sets a stark contrast to the older pieces. Not only in terms of the sound also in regard to the song-writing the latest material is definitely better crafted, which is due to the use of variation and a bit more in complexity. Unlike on the aforementioned demo Swamp added more layers to the guitars and even reduced the amount of monotony. Seems like they have discovered the effect of breaks and to what good these can be brought. Sadly, it merely reaches out to a 'good level', but has to halt in the middle, which has to do with the production. Yes, it all sounds a bit hollow at times and there is still a bit too much repetition as well as predictability in the performance. At least it does not drown in the same amount of pretentiousness as did the “Praise the Goat” demo – it is still old-school cow kicked another time though.

The second part of this release would be the second demo of the Greek band Swamp. Sadly, the band did not reconsider whether it would be a good idea to re-record/master the four compositions. Something had been done with them though and it seems have to do with the volume. This can be examined in the parts between the tracks in which some static noise thing is allowed to make an appearance. When it comes to the quality, then my demo tape has more to offer. 80s thrash/death/black metal without any kind of compromise or recognition of the development since the early days of the metal scene. Noisy, minimalist, a good amount of repetition and rather a straightforward song-writing. In case someone is into underground stuff, then this type of music might be something for his or her taste.

This “Nuclear Death” is a rather tame one. It does not hurt, it does not overtly annoy, it is not disturbing, it is not confusing. Rather, it leaves the listener a bit tired, which is due to the predictability of it all. In an interview the band talked about how parts of the vocals for this release had been recorded in a cave. Does this matter? No. Does this facet makes this output outstanding in any meaningful way? No ...

For collectors, I guess.

Timothy C Holehouse / Banana Pill split (2011)

3 Tracks (Tape – Jozik Records & Dislocation Deity Records) -_-_- (43:38)
<http://www.jozikrecords.net/>, <http://timholehouse.com/dislocation-deity-records/>

For some reason I have two copies of this tape. Maybe I have not been too careful when browsing the Jozik homepage back then. I think it is necessary to mention this, because it is not available from the label any more.

The bands on this split tape are complementary; this means, in terms of the style and concept they do not differ much from each other. In each case the music is minimalist, meandering endlessly and does never give the impression it could erupt at some point soon.

Timothy C Holehouse (23:34)

(UK; Ambient, Drone)
1 Track

The track seems to be divided into various segments – three at least and easily recognizable, because of a certain break in the sound and atmosphere. Originally recorded in 2003, it took up to 2010 until it had been mixed by Robert Hobson at Silent City Studios. I wonder why such a long time span has been necessary in the first place.

Dark ambient with a variation of layers and with different types of intensity sums it up in some respect. Gentle progression, slight noisy counterpoints and a decrease in intensity over the entire length of the composition. All becomes calmer and calmer as well as considerably minimalist.

It drowns the listener a bit, but it does not come over in such a way as to impose itself too much. Yes, it is melancholic and some might even label it as depressive, yet not all is gloomy. Especially the guitars towards the end are a nice counterpoint to the engulfing twilight. It is less concrete as Stillheten and it does also not have this emphasis on melodic fragments. "Into the Black Void" is more a puzzle than something coherent.

Banana Pill (20:04)

(Finland; Ambient, Drone)
2 Tracks

Banana Pill are not new to this magazine and have been reviewed before. Their art tends to have a distinct emphasis on repetition in the patterns and arrangements, which adds a certain kind of hypnotic touch to the performance. Such is not the case here; at least not in the first composition "Hiding". The band from Finland follows in accordance with the British one. Ambient/drone layers with some counterpoints. All is quite vague in the opener and in some respect even random. It is strange because it refuses to be penetrated easily and does not give away much. Jamming without a clear direction, a web with confusing arrangements and contrasts. By listening it is even difficult to make out the transition from the first to the second composition. It just happens. Aside from the strings also an accordion, flutes and the like make an appearance. What kind of instrument is actually used is of little importance, because the basic direction always remains the same.

Closing comments:

Two bands with nearly the same concept ... go figure. Over forty minutes of endless meandering around a minimalist concept, but with a variety of contrasting settings. Somehow it feels the bands have overdone it a bit here.

Note:

Limited to 80 copies; sold out at Jozik Records

Ubi Sunt – I (2012)

(USA; Funeral doom metal)

4 Tracks (MP3 – Self-released) - _ _ - (64:57)

<http://ubisunt.bandcamp.com/>

At times funeral doom as well as depressive black metal gives the impression of music that is merely played on a slower tempo and without a particular awareness of the level of variation that is necessary in order to keep the interest of the listener up. "I" by Ubi Sunt feels this way and it is unnecessary to point to a composition in particular in order to show or discuss the fallacies; they are basically everywhere.

The performance of the American band is solid, listenable and even well produced. What makes it all annoying is the shallowness or rather the predictability of the concept. Over the entire course of the release there is never any attempt to move away from this narrow interpretation of funeral doom. Rather hollow guitars with much 'bite', a bit of percussion elements, some amount of keyboard textures/elements and on top of it all the standard set of growls. Nothing new, nothing fresh, the horse that had been beaten to death so to speak.

The pace of the music is rather steady as is the progression of the riffs/arrangements. Counterpoints are nowhere to be seen and it is hard to not fall asleep at times. It all breathes the air of Skepticism, whose music follows a similar pattern: one melody expressed by all instruments. Yet "Ubi Sunt" are unable to craft their compositions in such a way as to fascinate the listener and grab the attention of this person. "I" feels like a story that has been told too often and to too many people; with the obvious result that it feels like a strain to take one further spin.

This debut release is not overtly bad; it just does not offer something fresh or interesting in particular. You may enjoy a spin or two, but definitely not more. According to the bandcamp entry the music deals with Thomas Campion and Solage. Considering the performance on the musical side, these references come over rather superfluous and maybe even a bit pretentious. There are simply too many other aspects that need to be dealt with before it is even necessary to bother about the lyrics and some kind of concept.

Can be downloaded from the bandcamp entry:

<http://ubisunt.bandcamp.com/>

Chaos Synopsis – Art of Killing (2013)

(Brazil; Death Metal, Thrash Metal)

10 Tracks (CD – Wydawnictwo Muzyczne Psycho) - _ _ - (39:39)

<http://www.facebook.com/chaossynopsisbr>

Art as a term is misleading, especially in the context of this release. With conceptual references about various serial killers the Brazilian band warrants numerous grotesque characters of the human history with a short amount of 'additional' prominence. Each of the compositions comes with a short focus on one of these, while the title gives some hints on the person in question. Whether it is possible to anticipate a certain conceptual approach, with a distinct character in regard to these "spotlights", may have to do with personal preferences that undoubtedly differ between the individuals. Nevertheless, one facet needs to be emphasized considerably: the conventionality of the way with which the band dealt with the issue at hand.

Indeed, instead of attempting to express the gruesome history of each serial killer in one way or another, reflected through the art of music and with insights into their deeds and their personality, Chaos Synopsis failed to stand true to their name. There is neither a chaos nor a synopsis that can be described as satisfying in any meaningful way. It lacks the teeth, something that would help it to break out of the level of conventionality. This modern type of death metal, this polished and well-presented piece of art, lacks the dirtiness, the incomprehensiveness of such a crimes, of the horrors perpetrated by any of these 'illustrious' characters. Projects too numerous to count spread similar concepts throughout the various interpretations of the grind genre. Odd samples from b-movies, disturbing noises, extreme counterpoints ... all this can be found on legions of other releases. Leaving a certain humorous or rather absurd touch aside, the combination of those various types of sounds helps some bands to set the stage, add nuances to the illusion, come over as convincing.

Chaos Synopsis are far away from this and only two tracks – B.T.K.(Blind, Torture, Kill) & Art of Killing – are allowed to have elements that would break out of the "ordinary routine" so to speak. The rest ... well ... modern death/thrash metal with few surprises. It is well executed, considerably catchy, has a good amount of aggressiveness etc. etc. etc. What might come as a surprise is that the brutality of the debut album Kvit ov Dementia (2010) has been watered down a bit. It all feels a bit calmer and more controlled. Be it the riffs or the vocals both facets appear in a more modern interpretation and can be described as an ambiguous experience. These touches of short but intense bursts can be interpreted as a reflection of the hectic of the deeds of the persons, while the methodical way in which some handled their killings would stand against this way of seeing things. Maybe also the lack of variation in the broader concept of the album is what leaves a bitter taste, some sense of dissatisfaction. It is a question of how it all can be boiled down.

Aside from this, it is a curious thing this last composition of this album. On the one side it is of an instrumental nature, but then it never feels like the vocals would be missing. In fact, the elements from the southern rock genre are quite peculiar and add the nuances, which the rest of the album actually lacks. This leaves the band in a somewhat awkward position, but the one track whose approach seems to be nothing more than a nice to have, is actually able to create more fascination than a considerable part of the rest of "The Art of Killing". The title track is a caricature of the release itself.

As usual, texts and music do not go hand in hand. Expectations created through the track titles and maybe even in advertisement, are shattered by the inability of the band to imagine a type of music that would on the one hand stretch the boundaries of the genre as much as necessary, but would still present to the listener interesting or in this case rather disturbing ideas. They play death metal... it is curious to see/hear this reluctance on their side. Why does "Art of Killing" feel like a safe approach with no sense or immediate tendency to push the barriers? Those with a fancy for modern interpretation of death/thrash might want to give it a try. Others will find the performance too generic and shallow, with no outstanding character or facets. A solid performance ... but definitely nothing more.

Astrum – Battalions of Hell (unreleased)

(USA; Black / Thrash Metal)

10 Tracks (??? – ???) -_- (24:51)

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Astrum/200580086972>

I happen to be the one, who wrote not only the first reviews on Blackthrone/Astrum but also someone who has followed the band over the course of the years. Furthermore, they also appeared in my magazine for an interview ... but ... the English language is a weird thing at times. Band is a word that is often dealt with in plural, while the reality can look quite different; like in this case. Timpaler Von Mulciber is the sole remaining member of this band, which is somewhat strange because the evolution seemed to point into a different direction. As did the music ... but maybe the current state is nothing but a short interval and another shift is just around the corner. Whether Astrum is destined to find the one in question remains speculative though.

Generally, the average track length is a good indicator for the basic direction of a release. With something less than three minutes on average, the Americans stick to something rather basic and with little progressiveness – in regard to more than one facet. Indeed, it feels stripped down, like a return to their core idea of this type of music, an overhaul of the development of the last few years. It is a distinct form of minimalism that has elbowed out parts of the facets that have entered the oeuvre as the time passed on. What has remained though is this feeling of underground. The feeling of caring not too much about musical developments and tendencies. An expression of a mind, whose favourite outputs are a bit dated, not particularly modern and also not too polished. A mixture between black, thrash and punk... a mixture of the early days of the scene.

It is important to point to one aspect in regard to Battalions of Hell: the compositions had been recorded with a real drummer and not with a machine; something that adds a nice touch and dynamic to it all. Jim Higgins (plays also in Abominant) is responsible for this aspect of the release and he does a good job in adding something the previous releases lacked a bit. Also the sound of a real kit is generally preferable over that of a machine. How the actual song-writing took place and what impact Jim Higgins had on the actual crafting of the music is unknown though. The slightly hollow vocals have not vanished and also the guitar sound is allowed to reappear. In terms of the lyrics all has stayed the same as well ... and also the vague bass-guitar is still there.

Straightforward, fast, raw, unpolished ... these are just some terms that can be used for describing this output. It has its special charm and its special target audience. This has always been this way and chances are that this piece of music will gather some wider attention is rather slim and therefore negligible. Compared with previous releases it is quite interesting, but it can be doubted that those in the more mainstream oriented branch of the metal scene will find much pleasure in actually enjoying this recording. Influences: old Venom, Hellhammer ... etc. you get the idea.

Carrasco – Aurora del Sortilegio (2009)

(Brazil; Thrash / Speed Metal)

6 Tracks (CD – Return the Crusher of Posers Productions) -_- (26:30)

<http://www.myspace.com/carrascothrash>

Aurora del Sortilegio is one the of the CDs that is somewhat difficult to write about. Not so much because the writer struggles with finding the proper words for some outré and well done performance, but rather on how to describe something which actually is not there. Carrasco from Brazil sound like one might expect it from a South-American band: anything but modern.

This alone is not something that can be pointed at as negative, but the longer this release takes, the more it all feels stretched and unnecessarily limited. Why not add some nice twists and variations to it all? Why does everything have to sound so much alike? Or if you take the track "Tormenta", then the memories on early Sepultura cannot be shaken off. With tracks whose length ranges from 2:22 to 6:36 the band is able to present various types of song-writing approaches, but all that happens is a mere factorization of what had been done before in a more condensed kind of way. Except for the pseudo-solo in "El sarcofago" nothing else is able to break out of the monotonous performance.

Fast paced and endless barrages of 80s-thrash riffs, are accompanied by a rather bloodless vocal performance and no instrument is allowed to break out of it all through some real solo part. "Aurora del Sortilegio" gives the impression as if the band actually recorded the music rather for themselves and not in order to engage the listener in any kind of way. It feels like they wanted to show how old-school they are (can be) and without any consideration on whether someone would actually care. There is no sickness, or nice breaks, interludes, riffs or anything that are worth remembering of this output.

Hardly recommended ...

Paganfire – Promo Tape

(Philippines; Thrash Metal)

8 Tracks (Tape – Self-released) - _ _ - (???)

<http://paganfire13.proboards.com/>

"For Underground Maniacs, Zines and Labels!!!"

Stereo sucks ... and who needs a left speaker, when the right one is able to do the job as well ... at times even alone. It is not as bad as Freezing Fog on their Hellish Rites demo, but it is equally annoying. Mixing sucks, production sucks, professionalism sucks ... but the fans still have to pay something that has not seen some kind of balancing. It really shows the disgust the band has for them.

Well, the music is thrash ... thrash... and even more thrash... or is it trash? Anyway, it is quite listenable actually or rather would be, but due to what had been outlined, most of the performance is ruined without much difficulty or effort. On a side note, it does not matter on how much you turn up the volume, this error is persistent and refuses to vanish. Everything is rather fast paced, has some nice solos and leaves no doubt about the intention of the band. Modern elements are absent as are anything that would create a counterpoint to the performance. It follows what countless bands have played already on too many releases. Paganfire's music can be enjoyed and you can hear that they have skill in handling their instruments, the problem is that are stuck in their own niche and trueness; somehow they do not want the listener to really enjoy their art. Even though this might be an overestimation, but each of the tracks has a different kind of production.

40 points for Gryffindor ... no, sorry, Paganfire.

Ordum – The Circle (2011)

(Lebanon; Black / Death Metal)

7 Tracks (MP3 – Self-released) - _ _ - (33:10)

<https://www.facebook.com/ORDUM.band>

When it comes to this young band from Lebanon, then the references are rather obvious: Dark Funeral, Dimmu Borgir and bands that move somewhere in between. Somewhat powerful and modern black metal with a lot of punch and little innovation. Nice to listen to, easily enjoyable and definitely well performed. Mainstream music that transcends borders and cultures, which is the aspect worthy to emphasize in this respect. Maybe this band from Lebanon simply wanted to show how easy it was for them to craft something that not only conceptuality but also in sound is able to reach for the artistic level of their Western metal counterparts. Therefore, they fell back on a formula that had been done countless times already, but which is still able to create some amount of fascination and even receive a certain amount of following.

And why not? The production is good; the solos are interesting and well performed. There is enough variation and quality added to this worn down style to make it more than just palpable. It is even possible to find counterpoints to the extreme metal throughout the album; These Suffering Times for instance. What might not be surprising are the lyrics. One of the members behind Ordum is Walid Wolflost from Kaoteon, whose music is quite explicit in dealing with various topics in and around Lebanon. War, destructions, massacres are something the musicians can write about without much difficulty, due to the countless years of turmoil in this and around this country. Glimpses of it can be extracted through the track titles, while the broader spectrum remains hidden. Nevertheless, the direction is clear and unmistakable.

Like a circle also this release spins around and around and does not give the impression of being able to break out of it. The band should be more daring in crafting their art, attempt to add some fresh facets to this worn down concept. Still interesting though.

Kalki Avatara – Mantra for the End of Times (2008)

(Italy; Experimental Folk/Symphonic Metal)

4 Tracks (CD – Shaytan Productions) -_-_- (20:55)

<http://www.myspace.com/kalkiavatara>

In case someone expects some kind of “metal inspired mantra” or some insights into the “end of times” on this recording, then this person will most certainly be disappointed by the performance by this Italian band, because neither of these aspects have found their way into the music. With only the lyrics of one track available and a rather modern (and mainstream-oriented) interpretation of the black metal genre, this debut output attempts to reach out to those fans, whose taste combines a certain amount of self-hatred as well as despise for the conservative approach of this type of music.

Luckily, the band does not follow the Western trend of merely drowning the concept through an endless barrage of keyboards. Or rather it does not feel this way, because the direction in which it all moves has a certain focus on Middle Eastern elements; at least those who happen to be of some prominence in the West. The melodies are enriched by various facets that fall out of the spectrum of the ordinary and it is up to them to bring the music on a new level. Two bands come to mind in this respect: Arcturus and Solefald. The Italians do not reach the level of the Norwegians, but a certain similarity in regard to the way the arrangements appear can be discovered. Kalki Avatara, and this is another main difference, is considerably less metal than the other two aforementioned bands.

“Mantra for the End of Times” offers an approach of contrasts. While the metal guitars play an important role, the intensity takes a dive again and again. Instrumental interludes, often without any amount of heaviness, tend to lead the general dynamic astray, and into a direction that not all fans of the metal genre might find pleasant or interesting. It is possible to make out a certain direction in the concept of the album: it opens with a hybrid between the facets, while towards the end the heaviness has gone altogether. A mixture of folk and neoclassic is what becomes dominant, but it fails to impress on a larger scale, due to the sterile sound of the instruments. Whether these were all created through some kind of keyboard or synthesizer is an open question, but as bands from the Middle East have a similar sound on their albums, it is easy to come to a rash conclusion.

Nevertheless, this output has a fascinating playful charm now and then, which should be emphasized and be brought up as an argument in favour of this release. The title has many errors in it, especially in respect setting the proper stage for the music and a track title like “Waiting for the Golden Age” has also a somewhat pathetic touch to it, but the band is actually able to deliver a solid performance.

Valonkantajat – Tuomittu elämään (2012)

(Finland; Modern Metal)

10 Tracks (CD – Violent Journey Records) -_-_- (50:24)

<http://www.valonkantajat.com/>

“Tuomittu elämään” is the debut release of the Finnish band Valonkantajat. Lupa, their 2011 ep, came over a bit too much Sentenced-influenced, which is somehow natural if you consider the style of the music and the prominence of this band. This impression has changed a bit and this is in spite of the fact that a good amount of the tracks have remained the same. Well, this is not entirely correct, because the band has remastered (or even re-recorded) their music for this output. Is it possible to recognize the differences, or are these rather marginal and therefore maybe even negligible? Well, these new interpretations come with their own special touch and style, while retaining enough of their previous concept in order to maintain the atmosphere as well as the dynamics.

With this new instalment the band has moved a bit into the direction of melodic metal, which has less of the marginally extreme facets with which Valonkantajat originally started with. The focus on melodic elements, catchy riffs and clean vocals is also still apparent, but it comes with considerably heavy guitars, which have a good amount of power thanks to a proper production. To bring up the reference to the other Finnish band Sentenced again, this new project follows more in line of the later outputs and never dares to come even close to the heaviness of the early releases. It meanders around the edges of the metal scene, has the characteristic elements, but has an easiness, which can be pointed to as an argument for this band and their style of playing. Also the focus on rather faster dynamics plays into this and the band rarely breaks below a certain pace in the compositions.

It all feels a bit rockish at times, but for some reasons the band likes to return to the metal realm again and again. A contrast between these two genres would be the emphasis that is being put in the instruments and how much room it is granted to them. Such is not always the case in the terms of the former one, especially when adding rather commercial music into the consideration. Solos play a vital role, the song-writing is as such as to present some nice and catchy melodies, while from a broader perspective the release does not give the impression of being tiring or boring. It holds together in a sound way and without presenting unnecessary parts or compositions; like a mandatory ballad for instance.

Those who happen to have a certain fancy for the late (and later) Sentenced might want to give this release a try. It is not as harsh or aggressive or intense but delivers something that is not too far away conceptually and atmospherically. It should be noted that Valonkantajat use their native tongue for the lyrics. This adds a nice touch to it all. Pretty enjoyable stuff...

Rotorvator – The Blues (2012)

(Italy; Experimental)

4 Tracks (Tape – Sangue Disken) - _ _ - (24:11)

<http://rotorvatorblack.blogspot.com>

Maybe the band longs for the blues, because in terms of musical similarities they are a bit off limits in this respect. There is none of the melancholy; there is nothing of this introspection that is commonly associated with blues. Or is there? Hints maybe? Vague references. Buried under the distorted layers of guitars, noise and drums. An uncertain contrast to the definite musical terror of the black metal facets, whose place is still seated for quite a large amount of time. Maybe the band has to use of the dynamics of this genre in order to add nuances to the music they would otherwise be unable to create.

The descriptor “experimental” sums it all up quite neatly, because this is how this release feels like. An attempt to try out a lot, vary elements to a surprisingly large degree, entertain the listener somehow, to progress to somewhere unknown. What might be the most astounding aspect is how it all seems to have its place, despite it being out of flow and conception. The female vocals in “Who is Earl?” are nice, but leave some confusion, because the track fails to deliver on the characteristic elements of Rotorvator; to be frank, it could have been a track from another band that has found its way on this output for some reason or another.

Let us talk a bit about it then:

With lyrics and vocals by the Italian folk singer Comaneci, two important aspects need to be noted. One; the overall absence of overtly intense and aggressive counterpoints; two; the use of a female voice, whose presence appears undistorted as well as unchallenged. Furthermore, due to the nature of how Rotorvator merged the atmosphere together or evolves it throughout the composition, a stark contrast to the extreme nature of their music is created. While aggressiveness dominates, here it all shifts into the direction of melancholy and contemplation.

Randomness or is it rather the consequential interpretation of the terminology of conflicting elements on how to deal with “The Blues”? The musicians shied away from a safe conception and interpretation of their music, which would have received another cobble stone with this output; the stone on which all too often a raven lingers, tormenting the world with this lifeless croaking. Each of the compositions breaks new ground somehow, while only vague similarities can be made out. Be it the sound of the guitars, the occasional intense electronic beats of the drums, the harsh vocals are some obvious one; especially as these are some of the core elements of the band throughout their history. Samples create counterpoints to the sequential compositional approaches, which follows in line with the way the Italians have always interpreted the boundaries between black metal and noise. Therefore, those whose main focus would be on the former genre might be confused about the lenient way in which it is all presented. For some reason the band avoids stylistic predictability or rather dares to venture into more obscure realms.

Nevertheless, this release feels like another one of this band. Another type of what they have done ... Those unfamiliar with the performances of Rotorvator might find pleasure in this, while others could be bored by a lack of daringness and overall innovation. From a broader perspective it all feels a bit tiring. Hopefully their forthcoming debut album is of a better quality.

Lily et Coco – Demo 2012 (2012)

(Taiwan; Post-rock)

3 Tracks (MP3 – Self-released) - _ _ - (26:14)

<http://lilyetcoco.bandcamp.com/>

Everyone should have some blog or site, which happen to deal with some kind of art; whether it is music, design or whatnot; preferably not on something as plain as mainstream stuff though. Yamato Dreams is one that I like to visit now and then, because it offers on insight into a musical sphere that is difficult to penetrate as a foreigner; especially due to the various types of Asian languages and therefore barriers. I am able to grasp a bit now and then, am able to recognize certain characters, but more is beyond my reach and in case a band is unable to express itself beyond their own natural language, then things can become rather difficult. Lily et Coco appeared on the aforementioned blog not too long and their music is available for free download. The three tracks on their demo output have English titles as well as Taiwanese ones, while the lyrics in the second track “跑 (Running)” are in their tongue and therefore incomprehensible to me.

Warm melodies, a well-played drum-kit, the always present sound of the bass-guitar and the common riff elements in the electric guitars appear contrasted with a playful keyboard, whose parts add a sweet loftiness to the performance of the Taiwanese band. Sometimes more of the one element, then a bit more of the other, but to some degree the description above sums it all up quite neatly. Even though the music gives the idea as if it had been created for itself and does not necessarily demand from the listener to be engaged in it somehow, the distance never feels like it would be unbridgeable. It is the easiness with which the melodies are varied and performed that leave a lasting impression. How it swings to and fro between the instruments, the arrangements and how it all does not feel forced but rather natural is what makes this output recommended and definitely enjoyable. Never pretentious, always grounded and somehow always up for a surprise.

伏羲 – 在寂靜的路上 (On The Dreariness Pathway) (2009)

(China; Folk, Folk Metal, Doom Metal)

7 Tracks (CD – Shang) - _ _ - (35:23)

Of course it is a certain interest in the Chinese culture. A country with such a rich history should be able to come up with folk metal bands, whose art reflects this on one way or another. How 伏羲 fits into this is difficult to explain from an outside perspective, due to my limitation in understanding Chinese as well as my lack of information on or of the lyrics. Aside from the translation of the track titles there is not much to deal with. But why complain? The band delivers as one might expect them to.

Elements and their part tend to vary a lot in terms of folk metal bands. While some stick to a rather complex set of these and merge these contrasting genres rather freely, others are more nit-picky and put the emphasis on either side and without giving a clear indication on how to label them properly. 伏羲 are an example for the latter one and they are neither completely metal nor completely folk. The seven compositions on their one and only release 在寂靜的路上 offer this mixture of extreme contrasts, which enable the listener to enjoy facets of the traditional Chinese music scene, while being reminded now and then that the times have changed; it is up to the electric guitars to create counterpoints to the sound of an erhu for instance. The composition 在寂靜的路上 is a charming example for this: the main melody is carried by Chinese instruments, while towards the end Western guitar elements accompany these and create such a charming example on how this “combined alliance” can play out. It is heavy, intense and quite appropriate for some head banging.

Sadly, 伏羲 only dare to bring the music to such extremes on a small scale. Bits here, a bit there, while the Chinese melodies and characteristics play a dominant role throughout the album. Actually, this is not a metal album, despite the metal elements in some of the compositions. It never feels this way, it never gives the impression of attempting to reach out for the Western scene in a convincing way. Like in the Chinese economy also here the West remains at the level of a partner, someone who is allowed to present some ideas, while the local firm or company runs the show. This kind of joint venture has led to some embarrassment in the past and even though this is actually quite a different story, it helps to point in the right direction. Nevertheless, also 伏羲 take what they can use and do it the “Chinese way”, like friends of mine from over there tend to describe it to me.

If there is one aspect that needs to be criticized and pointed towards then it has to do with the rather bland style of the drums. Judging from their sound, their dynamics as well as the very limited variation it can be expected that these had been programmed, not played by a real person and maybe even added as the last element to the recording. Having said as much, its appearance should not surprise in any kind of way; its presence is anything but convincing. Especially from the point of a reviewer it is somehow tiring to have to endure this reluctance of the bands to deny this element the proper care that would actually be necessary. Also from the perspective of the listener such a state offers hardly any pleasures.

Whether metal fans will be able to enjoy this piece of music is an open question. To label it as belonging to such a genre might be misleading though and should be a cause for serious scrutiny. It is definitely interesting ... but lingers around in the outstretches of the metal scene.

Sabazius – Parousia (2012)

(United Kingdom; Doom Metal)

2 Tracks (MP3 – Self-released) - _ _ - (65:56)

<http://sabaziusdoom.wordpress.com/>

How to deal with mythologies? How to deal with the modern widespread institution called church? How to deal with such obscure figures of the sort LaVey or Aleister Crowley. According to recent studies the trend in terms of spirituality moves away from the larger institutions and in the direction of some kind of fuzzy interpretation of the stories or tales or however you want to describe this properly. In some respect it is tricky, because on the one hand there is a rising impact of fundamentalism, while moderate positions are all too often a target of mockery; the safe position is the one that is taken. This whole issue remains a prominent topic in the metal scene as well as in other ones, due to the special status of religions in modern societies and cultural spheres.

Sabazius have already dealt with this topic in various ways on numerous recordings throughout their “career”, of which the opener of their self-titled debut album might be the best example. A juxtaposition of a diverse set of samples, whose topics range from something as plain as education over to ritualistic chants, helps to bring an otherwise rather minimalist doom metal approach to a level in which it leaves the listener not only fascinated but maybe even to some degree impressed. To those unfamiliar with the band and their albums it might be of use to know that these British musicians have a very peculiar way of approaching the song-writing and on returning to concepts on earlier albums; this becomes especially apparent on their latest split album with Hesper Payne.

Nevertheless, they are able to dig up obscurities, whose content merges together with the metal in a somewhat natural way without leaving the listener confused about the conceptual combination. Unintelligible growling in the background with the narration from the Book of Revelation on top of it. By putting it into the perspective of religion, these contrast remind on a Manichaeian world view, which is all too common in the mythology of the established churches. The distorted voice is a mocking retelling of the Holy Scripture, a speaking in another tongue, something that is nightmare inducing. Interestingly, there is a switch in this style towards the end and it is up to a clean whispering voice to continue with the "delayed" second narration. End of Days, an apocalyptic Christian insanity, a megalomaniac fantasy on the supposedly last days of this world, mankind and whatnot. Something worthy to laugh about, due to its overall absurdity, its strangeness, its otherworldliness. As outlined above, the musical setting is rather minimalist – drums and guitars –, but has enough variation and puts enough emphasis on certain passages in order to support the tension, the text and the atmosphere. To point to the excess of repetition in a conventional way would be misleading because Sabazius' concept deals with matter in another kind of way. Unlike other bands the goal of the song-writing indicates an intention of presenting it all in a broader framework, whose main advantage seems to be the confusing oddities that fit together for some inexplicable reason. The British band fails to deliver pleasantries. Actually, rather the contrary would be the truth. They demand attention but deliver just a confusing chaos.

With an opener called Lightbringer their art wanders off into their typical doom ramblings, with the distorted vocals and all this stuff, while only in the second track they present the odd contrasts of samples and metal music. Experimental in design, daring in the execution and demanding on various levels, Parousia is anything but easy, plain or even ordinary.

Sources pictures

<http://archive.org/details/chaosvisionofete00alta>

Outlook

I am currently working on something else,
which may lead to a delay of the release of the next edition